

# Destination DNA

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## Discovering, Developing and Delivering

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WACVB Annual Convention October 13-15, 2010

***One's destination is never a place but rather a new way of looking at things.***

**[Henry Miller](#)**

## Discovering the DNA

*The composition of a destination goes beyond the brick and mortar, physical location and attractions...beyond venues, amenities and visitor services.*

*The visitor experience is defined by the sum parts of a community.*

- The Obvious.**

- Destination Attributes:**

- Location
- Accommodations
- Attractions
- Magnets
- Assets
- Things to Do

- The Obvious.**

- Destination Capacity:**

- Organization
- Funding
- Resources
- Partnerships/Collaborations
- Challenges

- The Genetics.**

- Destination Genetics:**

- Culture  
*People with shared beliefs and practices; a particular set of attitudes that identify a class, place or time to which they belong.*
- Core Values  
*A set of basic beliefs that define what a person or people value most.*
- Lifestyle Characteristics  
*What a person or people do, buy, spend time at, enjoy, seek.*
- Issues that Bind and Separate  
*Those things that bring people together or cause dissension.*

**The Genetics.**

**Destination Genetics:**

The Character

*The feeling that the destination evokes; the words and phrases people might use to describe it.*

Infrastructure

*“Visitor-friendly”, accessibility, condition and commitment to it.*

Sense of “Place” or Community

*How people live and interact with their community and its people.*

Politics & Personalities

*How elected officials, management, residents and business owners feel and talk about their community as a place to live and visit.*

**Who You Really Are...**

**The Heart and Soul**

People, places, things, activities that are the heart and soul of your community.

What makes your community tick?

Who makes it tick?

Where do the locals go?

Where do they take visiting family and friends?

Where do they play?

What they do on their weekends and days off?

**Words or Phrases**

Describe your community?

Describe your destination?

Describe the people?

Describe the lifestyle?

What You Do Best...

**As a community?**

What are you known for, what is your claim to fame?

How do you attract businesses to relocate, retain them and grow them?

How do you attract people to live there?

What do residents say about the community?

**As a destination?**

What are you known for, what is your claim to fame?

What are your biggest magnets for visitors?

Who is visiting now and why?

How do you attract people to visit now?

What do residents think of the community as a place to visit?

- **Why People Visit the First Time...**
- **Ground Intelligence and Customer Motivations**
  - Family and friends...
  - Recommendations...
  - Something special...
  - A unique attraction or activity of interest...
  - Learning or experiencing something new or different...
  - Destination description matches what they seek...
  - Exploration...
- **What Brings People Back...**
  - How people were **treated** when they were in your destination.
  - How **easy** it is to explore, experience and move about your destination.
  - How they **feel** when they are in your destination.
  - What they **remember** about your destination.
  - How they **felt** once they returned home from your destination.
  - The **value** of the experience matched the investment.
- **Partnerships and Pairings**
  - Intrinsic Partnerships
    - Relationships with funding sources, government agencies*
  - Symbiotic Partnerships
    - Relationships with marketing partners, tourism industry*
  - Intuitive Partnerships
    - Relationships with the arts, sports, history, heritage, culture, wine, food.*
  - Opportunity Partnerships
    - A new twist on standard partnerships or pairings.*
    - Unexpected partnerships with unexpected people, companies or organizations.*

## **Digging the DNA**

*Discovery yields opportunities and challenges. Digging unearths all the issues that compose the 360 degree competitive environment and opens the door to action.*

- **Challenges.**
  - Manage, Mitigate or Change.**
- **Managing.**
  - Sometimes, the best you can do is manage a challenge.*
  - Identify the challenge.
  - Prioritize it in terms of its importance to mission achievement.
  - Explore options for managing.
  - Engage governing Boards and funding sources in deliberation.
  - Develop specific strategies, tactics and messaging.
  - Rally partners to management position.

Develop and execute a Plan of Action.

□ **Mitigating.**

*Sometimes you can identify resourceful or creative ways to mitigate a challenge.*

Identify the challenge.

Prioritize it in terms of its importance to mission achievement.

Seek options, alternatives and solutions.

Research, identify and propose resources.

Propose options, agree on course of action.

Persuade and advise marketing partners and funding sources.

Develop and execute a Plan of Action.

□ **Changing.**

*Sometimes you must take a stand to address a challenge and pave the way to change.*

Identify the challenge.

Prioritize it in terms of its importance to mission achievement.

Seek options, alternatives and solutions.

Engage Board and funding sources.

Network with others who will or may benefit.

Seek support from users.

Identify potential public/private partners.

Research resources.

Cultivate local champions and advocates.

Develop and execute a Plan of Action.

□ **Competition.**

**What's Real, What's Perceived and What Matters**

No two destinations are exactly alike...

□ **Conduct a comprehensive competitive set analysis:**

Meeting and convention competitive set

Leisure travel competitive set

Vertical market competitive set

Business travel competitive set

□ **Evaluate competition in terms of:**

Environmental Similarities and Differences

Location Similarities and Differences

Facilities, Venues and Accommodations Similarities and Differences

Climate Similarities and Differences

Accessibility Similarities and Differences

Affordability Factors Similarities and Differences

Visitor Experience Package Similarities and Differences

What's Real?

- **Comparable Elements**
  - Location
  - Accessibility
  - Ambiance
  - Facilities
  - Attractions
  - Amenities
  - Safety
  - Affordability
  
- **Incomparable Elements**
  - Your destination edge
  - Their destination edge
  - What's Perceived?
  
- **Comparable Elements**
- **Incomparable Elements**
  - Weather, Location, Natural Amenities, Safety, Crime, Accessibility, Affordability, "Fun Factor", Big, Small
  - What's the perception?
  - How did it take root?
  - Who is sustaining it?
  - How can you manage, mitigate or change it?
  
- **Build the Definitive Competitive Matrix**
- **Comparisons of Real and Perceived**
  - Identify points of differentiation
  - Identify points of comparability
  - Pragmatic analysis
  - Leverage strengths
  - Identify options and resources for managing, mitigating or changing areas where you are less competitive.
  - Develop specific sales tactics for each competitor.
  - Prepare to handle objections.

## **Developing the DNA**

*Understanding your destination and competitive environment through a new prism produces an insightful and pragmatic perspective from which to make good decisions.  
Good decisions lead to actionable programs that deliver results.*

- **Defining and Developing**
  - Build immediately actionable experiences that gain traction in the marketplace.*
  - Defining.**
  - Destination DNA helps to build a stronger marketing platform.

- **The Catalog**

What did we learn from the inventory of Obvious and Genetic materials?  
What new discoveries can help build new traction?

- **Destination Markers and Placemakers**

Who are we at heart? What really makes our community tick? How do our residents feel about themselves, their community and visitors?

- **Ground Intelligence and Customer Motivations**

Who visits, why and how do they feel while they are there and when they return home?  
What do we do best now?  
What do we want to be known for in the future?

- **Challenges**

What are they, what can we manage, mitigate or change?  
What's most critical to our competitive positioning?

- **Potential Partnerships**

What are partnerships producing now?  
What are potential opportunities?

- **Competition**

What does the pragmatic analysis reveal about your strengths and vulnerabilities?  
Differences and similarities?

- **Ranking and Action Tags**

Rank each Obvious and Genetic characteristic in practical terms:

- Marketability
- Audience and Target Market Appeal
- Capability and Capacity
- Obstacles

Tag each with an Action Tag:

- Ready to Go – *everything you need to put this into play is ready.*
- Develop – *there is ground work to do to put this into play.*
- Research – *need to know more before developing.*

## **Developing.**

Building the marketing platform from Destination DNA provides a stronger foundation.

- **The Catalog**

Take the raw materials and craft new programs and opportunities.

- **Destination Markers and Placemakers**

Take the findings and core values discovered and craft compelling messaging for external and internal campaigns.

- **Ground Intelligence and Customer Motivations**

Take the information and deploy strategies and tactics that leverage the findings.

- **Challenges**

Take the “truths” and empower yourself by developing tactical approaches to each.

□ **Potential Partnerships**

Take the accustomed pairings and spice them up; take seemingly unusual pairings and propose new opportunities.

□ **Competition**

Play to your strengths, master your vulnerabilities and diminish your weaknesses.

□ **Ranking and Action Tags**

Rank each section for its strengths and weaknesses in terms of:

Marketability

Audience and Target Market Appeal

Capability and Capacity

Obstacles

Tag each with an Action Tag:

Ready to Go – *everything you need to put this into play is ready.*

Develop – *there is ground work to do to put this into play.*

Research – *need to know more before developing.*

## Optimize the DNA

*Optimizing the power of your destination DNA requires focus on strengths, potential for traction and sustainability.*

□ **Prioritizing to Penetrate.**

*Prioritize to Optimize Marketing Impact*

□ **The Catalog**

Choose your most marketable assets and take them vertical.

□ **Destination Markers and Placemakers**

Build on your community consciousness, don't sell against it.

□ **Ground Intelligence and Customer Motivations**

Know your customers and grow that market share.

□ **Challenges**

Manage what exists, mitigate resourcefully and change what you can.

□ **Potential Partnerships**

Develop new partnerships that extends tourism clout into the community.

□ **Persuading to Perform.**

*Persuade to Optimize Ownership*

□ Cultivate a powerful internal network.

□ Seek advocates from your ranks and empower them.

□ Make it about “storytelling”.

□ Equip network with compelling messages and talking points.

□ Identify and nurture champions.

□ Identify and nurture champions in and outside the industry.

□ Rally residents *and* industry to the cause.

- Take your “passion and purpose” to the people, in terms that will resonate with them.
  
- **Perfecting to Compete.**  
*Train, coach and empower.*
  - CVB staff and management
  - Boards and tourism industry stakeholders
  - Tourism industry staff
  - Elected officials and management
  - Partners
  - Business and Community leadership
  - Residents
  - Re-visit, re-fresh and renew.
  - Sustaining the DNA Platform
  
- **Politics, Personalities and Money**  
Politics. Personalities. Money.
  
- **Rules of the Road:**
  - Know what your funding sources need, want and expect and incorporate this into your policy and marketing plan development.
  - Know your powerbrokers and influencers and engage them early and often.
  - Identify and cultivate “outsiders” to lend credibility and flex political muscle.
  - Speak the language of elected officials and city management.
  - Integrate your Destination DNA on many community levels to build ownership.