Making Connections with Your Visitors
Tips from the Field of Interpretation
Regardless of our position, each of us plays a role in connecting visitors to our site...
Definition of Interpretation

A communication process that forges emotional and intellectual connections between the interests of the audience/visitor and the meanings inherent in the resource.

National Association for Interpretation
Visitors want (demand) positive experiences.

According to Pine and Gilmore, we are in the Experience Economy...
Agricultural Economy
Manufacturing Economy
Service Economy
Experience Economy
Everything matters!

Visitor Experience

- Media
- Buildings
- Programs
- Maslow's Hierarchy
- Natural/cultural resources
- Staff
- Trails
What are some questions visitors ask you?

? 

If people are to enjoy an experience you must accommodate their basic needs...
If visitors don’t feel comfortable what happens?
Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Physiological
Physiological
Safety
Elements of Experience Economy

Accentuate the positive cues
Eliminate negative cues
Make it thematic
Provide memorabilia
People expect positive experiences

“Customers” no longer want choice, they want exactly what they want.

You must keep the experience fresh.
Accentuate the positive

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Gourmet Maple Syrup Dinner

The St. Joseph County Parks and Recreation Center invite you to attend a
Accentuate the positive
Interpretive Polygon

- Interpretive Techniques
- Connecting Visitors to Your Site
- Know Your Resources
- Know Your Audience
Know your audience
Know your resource
Eliminate negative cues
Eliminate negative cues
Authority of the Resource

1. Introduce yourself. Break the ice.
2. Share an objective description of the situation.
3. Explain the implications to the resource. Use questions to draw in the visitor and listen to their answers.
4. Tell them what can /should be done to improve the situation.
Provide memorabilia
Theme the Experience

Building design

Site planning

Natural and cultural resources

Uses compatible with the resource

Common goals

Staff professionalism

Media
Sociable

- Friendly and open (verbally & nonverbally)
- Empathetic/show compassion
- Initiate conversation
- Ask open ended questions
Sociable Honest

• Build trust
• Know when to respond and when to refer
Sociable
Honest
Individual

• Tell your story
• Treat others with respect

“This person is important. What can I do to give her the kind of day she came to this place to have?”
-Disney philosophy
Sociable
Honest
Individual
Needs-based

• Meet basic needs first
• Listen
• Watch for non-verbal clues
• Know site and issues
• Exceed expectations
• What details will affect visitor satisfaction?
• Practice responding to complaints/questions

It is just the little touches after the average man would quit that make the master’s fame.

- Orson Swett Marden
• Accentuate the positive cues
• Eliminate negative cues
• Provide memorabilia
• Make it thematic

Sense of Place
Sense of Place

Establishing a sense of place helps people identify with the site, their region and with each other.
Sense of Place

Builds support for the agency

Builds understanding of policies and programs

Builds understanding of the park’s role in the community
So What????

A strong sense of place can lead to more sensitive stewardship of our cultural history and natural environment.
Sense of Place

Why will people choose to have experiences at your site?
Connections between the visitor and the resource.
Who connects visitors to your site?
Who connects visitors to your site?
Who connects visitors to your site?
Who connects visitors to your site?
Regardless of our positions, each of us plays a role in connecting visitors to our sites.

Everyone’s an Interpreter!!
When we make great connections, our visitors have great experiences.
Everyone Plays a Role in Connecting Visitors to Your Site

For more information about NAI and its Certified Interpretive Host program:

www.interpnet.com
Special thanks to…

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