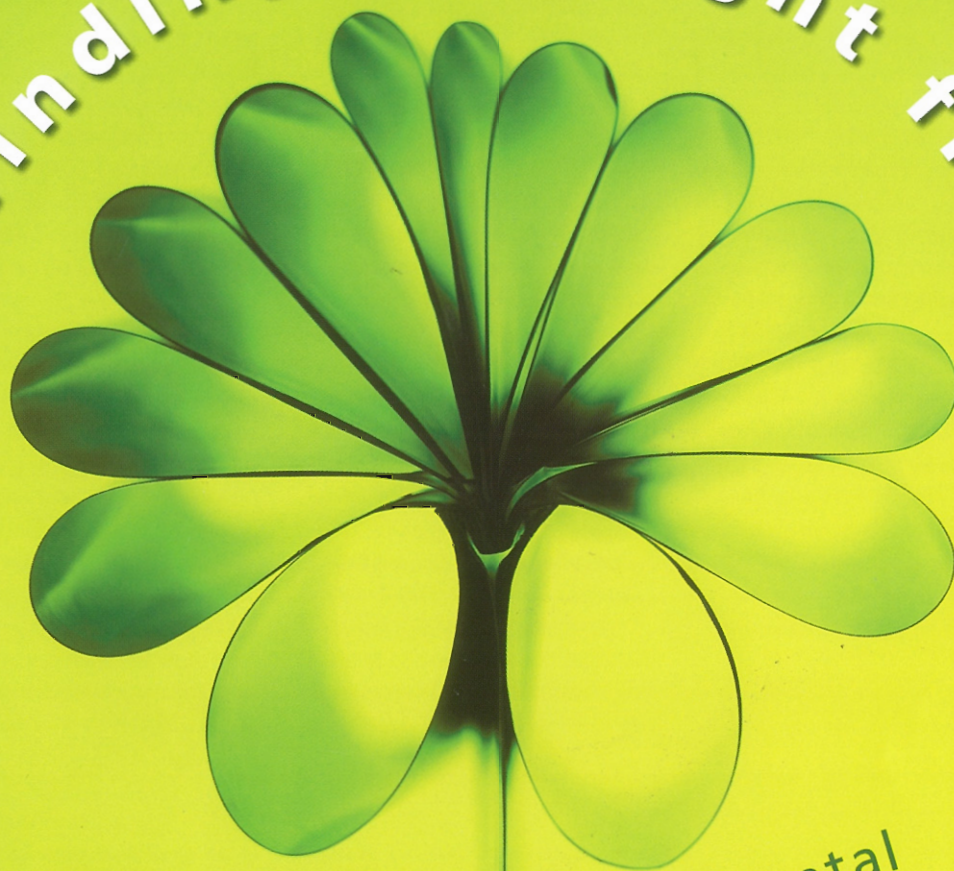


smart thinking and  
industry innovation

MARCH/APRIL 2008

# Tourism BUSINESS

finding the right fit



a guide to environmental  
accreditation in your business

**27 growth  
strategies for a  
slower market**

- A walk in the park:  
DOC's role in tourism
- Freedom camping:  
Tackling the waste problem
- Free marketing tools

NZ\$7.90 (incl GST)



9 771177 302006

# Free marketing tools

You don't always have to spend money to market your business, says TRISH MAY.

**W**HEN it comes to talking about marketing the word 'free' is usually never mentioned in the same sentence. But in reality there are a few 'free' and low cost marketing tactics you can employ to gain profile and ultimately drive customers through your door.

When working with new or fledgling tourism businesses there are a few questions I ask to ascertain if they've leveraged free marketing opportunities.

## Are you on [www.newzealand.com](http://www.newzealand.com)?

This is Tourism New Zealand's consumer website and it is the 'call to action' for their global marketing campaign. The average number of unique users to the home page is 337,258 per month and Tourism New Zealand reports that traffic is growing, on average, at 19 percent a year.

Listing is free, so why would you not take advantage of exposing your business to thousands of information hungry consumers. If you've not yet registered then visit <http://www.register.nzta.co.nz>.

## Are you receiving industry news letters and information?

The internet is packed with information so take time to review tourism and marketing related sites. They can provide you with good tips and information and usually have a sign-up mechanism for free newsletters and RSS feeds.

Ensure you take the time to read them. You may be alerted to a worthwhile seminar in your region or be made aware of a major group, conference or incentive being planned. If your product suits that audience then approach the key decision maker to potentially convert that business.

Tourism New Zealand regularly produces 'Regional Rap' which provides a summary of their global marketing activities. It's free!

## Have you joined your local RTO?

Your nearest Regional Tourism Organisation performs a vital function in marketing your region to domestic and international audiences, plus they disseminate industry information back to you.



PHOTO NEW ZEALAND / KIM CHRISTENSEN

Word of mouth is a valuable marketing tool.

When Nikki Marsh and Mark Gilbert set up Hassle-free Tours they were both new to tourism. "Early on we joined both our local promotional associations and Christchurch and Canterbury Tourism." They made time to attend seminars, industry events and read their publications. "We gained critical insights into the industry, details on market opportunities and profile within the industry."

Tourism is all about relationships and maintaining a presence, at events like seminars, is an important way of establishing relationships. Swapping business cards with the person sitting beside you is free!

Rotorua's RTO, Destination Rotorua Tourism Marketing offer new operators free access to a basic range of benefits such as newsletters, invitations to seminars and listings in certain publications.

Some other RTOs have membership fees and marketing packages so check with them for their membership details and benefits.

## Do you have a database of past customers?

Satisfied customers are your best free marketers. In market research surveys 'Word of Mouth' ranks at the top when it comes to decision making.

Invite your customers to opt into your database (they must give their permission).

How you then use this is likely to de-

pend on your product. If your product is a once-in-a-lifetime experience you could use the database to incentivise your former customers to refer their family and friends. If your product attracts regular customers, for example the luge at Skyline Skyrides in Rotorua and Queenstown, then you will be encouraging your customer to come back again and again.... and bring their friends and family.

## Have you hosted any travel writers?

Hosting travel writers to your business is essentially free, especially if you have a spare seat in your vehicle, helicopter or launch that is already taking paying passengers.

Selecting or accepting the most appropriate writer to host is the key to success. Find out who they write for, their circulation, will you be profiled in a fact box, what angle they are taking and when the story will be published.

Once you've done your research on the writer and whether they do suit your product the benefits of hosting far outweigh the resources you've actually applied to them.

*Trish May is principal of May Communications and Marketing Ltd. She has consulted to a range of tourism businesses over the last seven years particularly smaller businesses. [www.maymarketing.co.nz](http://www.maymarketing.co.nz)*