

## **Succeeding in tourism**

**A series of practical articles by Chris Elphick, Breadfruit Consulting, aimed at tourism SMEs.**

### **Article one – an introduction**

Over the next few weeks I will focus on the challenges and opportunities facing small businesses working in the tourism industry.

Across the Pacific tourism has been identified as a major industry for economic development and resources are provided by a wide range of organisations. This focus on tourism obviously provides enormous opportunities to rural and urban communities alike but will it be possible for everyone to access those opportunities? Will there be an equal playing field? Will tourism reap the rewards for small rural businesses in remote parts of the Pacific? How will small tourism businesses be able to compete with their larger and probably better resourced neighbours? How will locally run tourism businesses be able to compete with expat run and resourced operations?

During this series I will be exploring what tourists want and how this matches up to what we provide; how we meet and exceed expectations and send tourists home determined to come back bringing all their friends; how the Pacific can create a reputation for exceptional and consistently high service; how we can develop a vibrant tourism industry without damaging our local cultures; how tourism can economically benefit rural areas; how tourism can provide jobs and careers for our young people; what needs to happen to support a sustainable local tourism industry; what are we really selling to visitors and how we make sure they take home unforgettable memories.

We are lucky in the Pacific to live in some of the most beautiful countries in the world – countries that people do want to visit and experience. Many visitors want to understand our culture, meet local people, get a taste of Pacific life. They want to experience the things that the Pacific offers that are not available elsewhere

Tourism is certainly an industry full of opportunities. This short series of articles looks at how small tourism businesses can make the most of these opportunities and turn them to their advantage. Tourists will not just turn up! And they certainly will not return if they do not have the experience of a lifetime!

A few months ago I ran a workshop for local tourism providers – of the 40 people present only two had ever been tourists and travelled outside their country. 38 people were trying to deliver products and services to people they knew nothing about – they had been encouraged by a range of organisations to develop small scale accommodation or tours but had received little or no realistic help or guidance on how best to do this.

I hope this series will help small scale tourism operators to become more effective and profitable and therefore develop a sustainable industry offering jobs and careers to local people while providing stunning experiences to visitors from all over the world. Tourism has the potential to transform the economy of Pacific countries, but it also has the potential to

deepen the divide between the haves and the have nots. No Pacific country can afford for this to happen.

Tourism is not an easy industry to succeed in. Products and services have to live up to expectations; visitors have to come; visitors have to be looked after; problems have to be solved before they get out of hand. It is essentially a people industry where people from different cultures come into close contact with each other for short periods of time. Social media means that people can broadcast their experiences to the world almost immediately after they have had them – good and bad!

If you have any tourism issues you would like me to cover during this series, please contact me.

Coming next, what do tourists want and how do we make sure they get what they want?

**Chris Elphick is Partner in Breadfruit Consulting, supporting the development of a range of businesses and organisations in Melanesia and other parts of the Pacific. He is an experienced trainer, coach and business mentor and has years of experience of working with Small & Medium Enterprises. He and his partner Hazel Kirkham live in Vanuatu and are involved with tourism operators and their businesses in several Pacific countries.**

**Breadfruit Consulting have partnered with Fiji Entrepreneur to develop mentoring services for new and young entrepreneurs.**

**If you have an issue or query related to this article, please contact Chris at [chris@breadfruitconsulting.com](mailto:chris@breadfruitconsulting.com) or text to +6785500556**