

THE GUEST EXPERIENCE MAP™

| THE GUEST EXPERIENCE MAP™ | | Start segment | Designed by | Date | Version |
|---------------------------|--|---------------|-------------|------|---------|
| BEFORE | | | | | |
| DURING | | | | | |
| AFTER | | | | | |

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Designed by: feNATION PTE. LTD. (Singapore) - Version 2.0

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WORKBOOK

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Welcome

Your experience wants to be great. It has greatness in it.

There's not a travel category on the planet that doesn't have at least one great experience doing well, no matter the economy, the competition, or the market conditions.

In this workshop, we're going to design new or improve on existing guest experiences in your business.

We'll do so by dividing your approach into three distinct and independent units: The BEFORE, the DURING and the AFTER units.

We call this system of how these units work together *The Guest Experience Map*, aka the *GEM*.

The GEM was created with a specific set of universal ideas and is designed as a big picture assessment of your guest experience. Its purpose is to provide you and your team with a framework for creating breakthroughs.

Each unit serves a very distinct purpose and focuses on a different phase within the guest experience.

The BEFORE unit focuses on systematically attracting the right guests and getting them to the point where they book.

The DURING unit focuses on creating a remarkable guest experience and incremental revenue generation.

The AFTER unit focuses on making departing guests part of the family and earning lifetime fans.

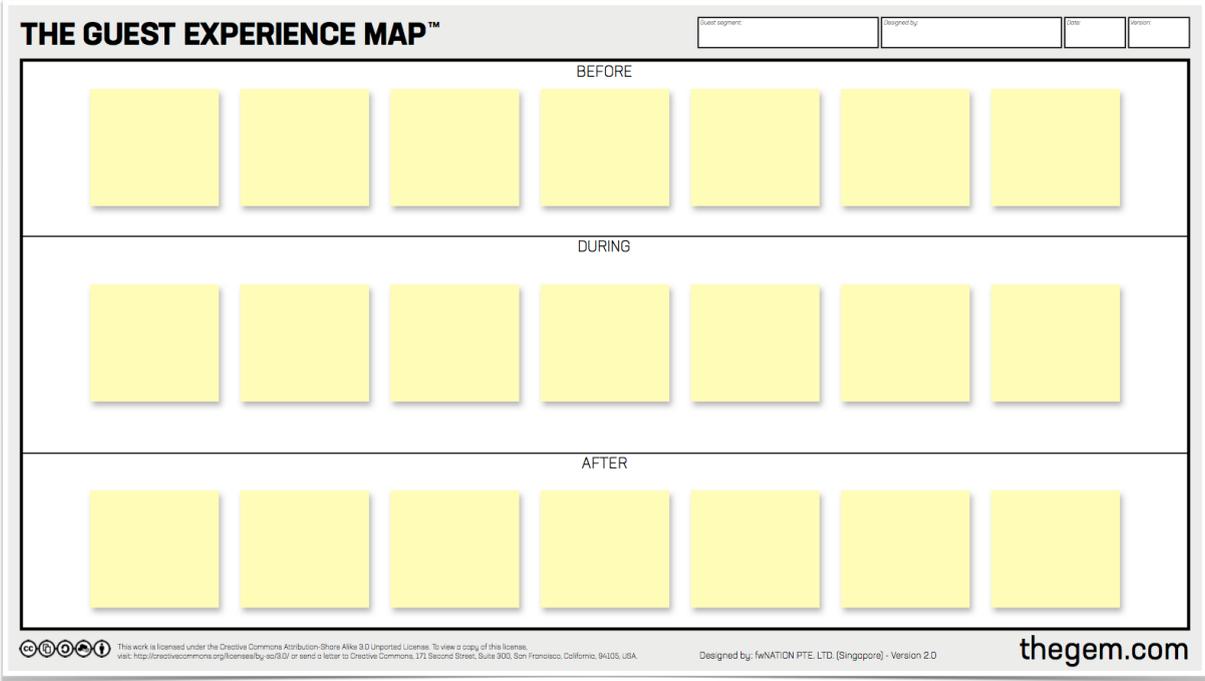
Each of these independent units of the business has its own operations, objectives, metrics and financial contribution to the business as a whole.

Inside this workbook, you'll find an overview of the GEM's key elements, as well as examples and trigger questions to help you and your team.

So, let's create some breakthroughs!

How to use the map

The GEM can be applied to new and existing experiences and guest segments alike. In both cases, it will help you structure your thinking and make your ideas more tangible. The GEM can be used within teams, to have better strategic conversations, or individually, as a tool to structure your thinking.



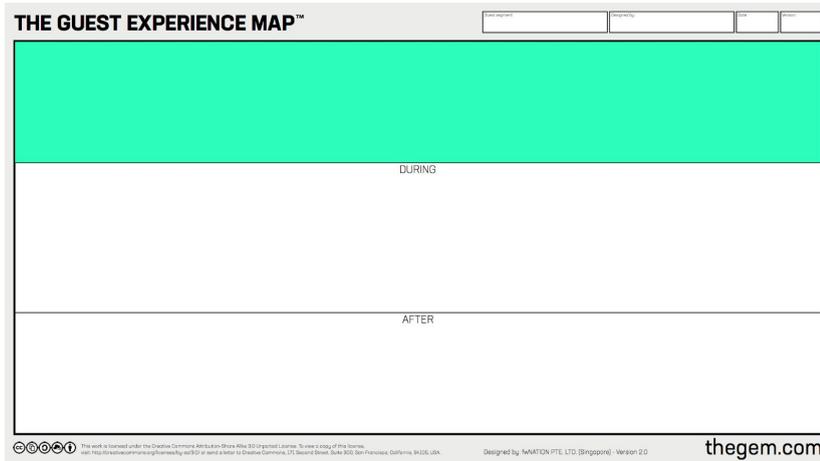
visit thegem.com/map to download a fresh GEM

A few tips:

Create multiple maps: focus on one map for a specific guest segment and clearly outline what the experience will be for that type of guest. You can create as many maps as you need.

Mix present and future: Make sure you clearly distinguish between presently existing experiences and future ideas.

Don't get too granular: don't add too many ideas or details to your map. Too many details hide the big picture. You're aiming to create your blueprint for breakthroughs, on one page.



The BEFORE unit

The BEFORE unit focuses on systematically attracting the right guests and getting them to the point where they book.

Dominate one specific target market (at a time)



It's hard to make breakthroughs if your ideal guest is anyone with a credit card. That's why the BEFORE unit needs to kick off with not just picking, but dominating one specific target market at a time.

You can have more than one target market, but there's incredible power in dominating and getting the most you can from one segment at a time.

There's almost an unlimited amount of niches you can dominate.

When you set out to dominate a market, it completely changes your approach to things. When you dominate a single target market or niche, we call this being 'the mayor'. By being the best for your niche, you become the clear and obvious option for your ideal guests and your BEFORE unit becomes exponentially more effective.

Here are some great examples:

[Exuma Watersports](#) - Many tour companies can take you to see the swimming pigs. But Exuma Watersports created the Instagram account [@TheSwimmingPigs](#) to speak to, and dominate, the conversation amongst their target market: Insta-happy millennials.

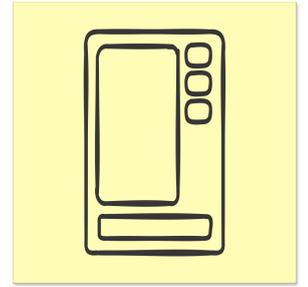
[Pennicott Wilderness Journeys](#) - By dominating one specific target market at a time, Pennicott Wilderness Journeys has grown their experience from one single boat to six multi-award-winning experiences. Each one successfully caters to, and dominates, a different niche.

[Tokoriki Island Resort](#) - By being an adults-only resort, it was able to be the mayor of honeymooners and older couples who wanted a peaceful childfree stay. The result? In 2018, it achieved TripAdvisor's #1 ranking amongst luxury resorts in Fiji.

Use the following trigger questions to help you and your team come up with different potential breakthroughs.

- Who is our perfect guest?
- For which type of guest are we providing a truly remarkable experience?
- What niche or guest segment can we be the mayor of?
- How can we study potential new guest segments?
- Are there new underserved markets we haven't tapped into?
- What members of our team can become spokespeople for a specific niche, cause or belief?
- What are our most important guest segments? Where is the biggest growth potential?
Which segments are declining?

Compel your ideal guests predictably



Does your marketing feel like a slot machine, where you put money in, pull the lever and hope for something good to come out at the other end? Compelling your ideal guests predictably, is about building a vending machine - one where you put money in and you know with predictability what you'll get back in return.

OTAs can sometimes be a great vending machine. Guests have been well trained to use them. Even though OTAs can take a bite out of your initial revenue through commissions, it's possible to find the right one that is your perfect vending machine - one where you dominate your specific target market.

Facebook and Google can also be great vending machines. Hoping for organic reach on social media is slot machine thinking. When you're crystal clear on the single target market you're going to dominate, it becomes easier to create offers that convert at a known cost within both the Facebook and Google ecosystems, thus compelling your ideal guests with predictability.

Creating your own events, especially recurring ones, is a great way to compel your ideal guest predictably. Events give a sense of urgency and a further reason to book. They can also be a great way to drive visitation in the off-season.

Examples:

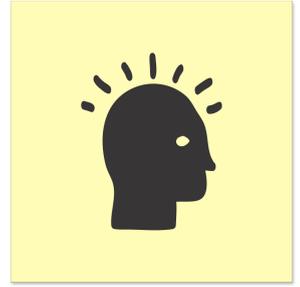
[Hamilton Island](#) - [The Great Whitehaven Beach Run](#) brings in a host of runners in the offseason for a once-a-year chance to race on one of the most beautiful beaches on earth. They run targeted Facebook ads, in order to reach their exact target market; runners in capital cities across Australia.

[Parkes Elvis Festival](#) - Your event doesn't have to be massive at the beginning - some of the world's biggest events, including the Cannes Film Festival and the Burning Man Festival, only had a handful of people their first year. The Parkes Elvis Festival had only 300 attendees when it began in 1993; it now attracts over 25,000 guests and is one of the top festivals in Australia.

[The BaBa Beach Club](#) - runs targeted ads via Instagram Stories to get young travellers currently in Thailand to listen to their playlist and encourage them to visit their popular Phuket beach club.

Trigger questions:

- Have we built a marketing slot machine or a vending machine?
- Can we predictably attract our ideal guest for a known cost?
- Have we fully optimised our key OTA listings? Are there new best practices we could be taking advantage of?
- How do we dominate in our target OTAs?
- Which OTA sends up the highest value guests?
- Which type of content performs best on our key partner's channels? Do we create this type of content?
- Putting yourself in your ideal guest's shoes, how does our experience rank in the Google ecosystem? From other countries?
- Who is also speaking to my perfect guest?
- Who is doing the best job at compelling guests? (In similar offerings or those different to mine)
- [Have we used the Empathy Map to walk in our perfect guest's shoes?](#)
- Can we use Google search tools (like [Google trends](#) and [Google Keyword](#) planner) to analyse data and new targeting opportunities?
- Can we create a recurring event, where our experience is front and centre?



Educate and motivate

For your guests, there can be as much enjoyment in the planning of the trip as the trip itself. That's why, once you're clear on what you're going to be the mayor of, and how you're going to find those guests with predictability, it's time to educate them and then motivate them to pick your experience.

Your social profiles are a great way to educate and motivate your ideal guests. This includes showing real guest stories, behind-the-scenes activities, recognition of your best team members, showing what a typical day for a guest would look like and even giving a shout out to the nearby experiences that complement your offer.

With guests using multiple touchpoints (social, websites, blogs etc) as proof points, it's important to not just tell a great story on your own channels, but to also give a story to tell on all the other sources where your guest might make that booking decision.

A 3rd party validation, like a story covering your offering in a key publication that your ideal guest reads, is pure gold. Find where your ideal guest spends their time and find a way to tell compelling stories that will educate and motivate them to pick you.

Examples:

[Symbio Wildlife Park](#) - Symbio generated an impressive 132% growth in attendance since 2016, off the back of several million views of their adorable koala videos, which were picked up by Tourism Australia. By giving a story to tell the media and the national tourism board, they were able to get incredible exposure to their core market: visitors and local families.

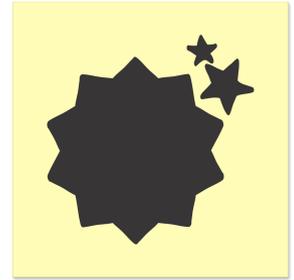
[Dojo Bali](#) - On Instagram, the featured stories at the top of their profile are used to showcase the highlights of their experience offer, including the space, events and the surrounding area. Potential guests are given a glimpse of what the experience will be like for them.

Trigger questions:

- Are our stories easy for partners and key channels to pick up?
- Are we using the best of our social media content at key touchpoints (like our website), where potential guests are making their purchasing decision?
- Do our social media channels do a great job of showing potential guests the type of stories they will be able to share on their own profiles?
- Do we have the right content to showcase our experience highlights?
- Can you pitch an exclusive story angle to a publisher?
- Do our key partners have all the key facts about our experience? Can we create a fact sheet?
- Have we fully used our awards and 3rd party validation at important touchpoints?
- Do all my key distribution channels have the best assets to sell my experience?
- Do our best stories translate well into other key languages?

Make irresistible offerings

What is it that makes your experience truly irresistible and how are you putting that front and centre to attract your ideal guests? Can you perfect that offer, to make it irresistible time and time again?



Often a guest's barrier to booking is not lack of desire, but lack of urgency. By creating irresistible offers like events and packages, you give visitors an incentive to move the trip from their bucket list, to the next thing on their list.

Examples:

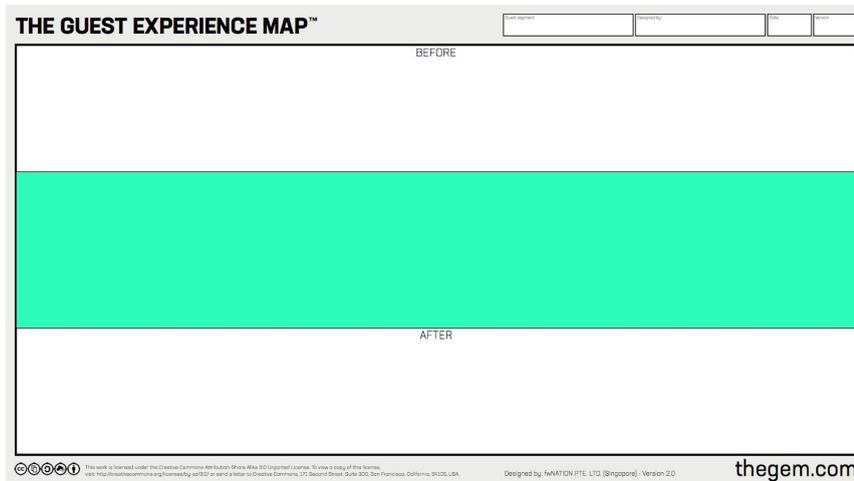
[FlyNyon](#) - FlyNyon offers the ultimate photo experience for professional and amateur photographers, by letting guests fly over major cities in an open-door helicopter. They have built multiple strategies to create urgency to book. They not only offer special online prices as a motivator for guests to book directly, they also offer a 'book now, schedule later' option for guests who might have come in via their social channels, which allows future guests to lock in their commitment and complete the scheduling at a later time.

[Luxury Lodges of Australia](#) - by virtue of their remoteness, their special location and intimate size, each of the lodges have a clear, irresistible offering that is exclusive to each lodge. For example, Longitude 131° is the only place where you can fall asleep while looking at the majestic Uluru and the stars.

[137 Pillars House](#) - By booking directly through their website, you get a complimentary one-way airport transfer by private limousine, 15% discount on spa treatments, a complimentary room upgrade to the next best room category and a late check out, free of charge until 4pm.

Trigger questions:

- What is our irresistible offer?
- What risk can we eliminate in our offering?
- Do we have a strong incentive for guests to book directly with us?
- What is our unique value proposition?
- Is our experience so remarkable that it is the marketing?
- What's new and innovative about our offering?
- What new offerings can we prototype?
- What assets do I have (physical, people, access) that we can highlight as our irresistible offering?
- Are my ideal guests willing to pay for something more?
- What is our ideal guest's aspiration and how can we live up to this?
- What do guests need? Where are the biggest unsatisfied needs? Where is the demand increasing? And declining?
- What are guests really willing to pay for? Where can the largest margins be made?
- Who can we study that has irresistible offerings?

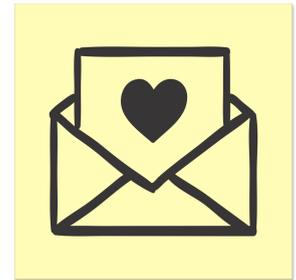


The DURING unit

The DURING unit begins once a guest has made a booking and encompasses all activity between that initial interaction and their departure.

This is where most of your team's attention goes, and it's also the biggest opportunity to create remarkable guest experiences and generate additional revenue.

Pre-arrival communication: building up anticipation



For your guest, the anticipation of a stay can be just as important as the stay itself. Why not amplify this by starting off with a great experience in your pre-arrival communication?

The confirmation email is a great way to make a remarkable first impression and to reassure your guests that they have not only made the right choice, but that the experience is going to exceed their expectations.

How could you improve that experience? Perhaps it's a reminder message 24 hours before their arrival with a suggested packing list, answers to frequently asked questions, or all the key travel details they will need to eliminate any potential friction.

Example:

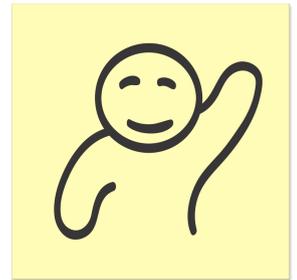
[Ace Hotel](#) - Book at any of the Ace Hotel properties and you'll get a beautiful confirmation email that evokes the brand's personality; it feels like a real human wrote the email rather than a corporate communications department.

Trigger questions:

- How can we surprise and delight in the initial contact?
- Does our welcome email truly build up anticipation?
- What tone does our welcome email set?
- Have we answered our guests' most frequently asked questions?

Arrival: creating a remarkable first impression

Removing any friction in your arrival process is an important step in a great first impression, but once the essentials are taken care of, there's an opportunity to really create something special... even remarkable.



Examples:

[DoubleTree Hotels](#) - DoubleTree Hotels gives each guest a warm chocolate chip cookie at check-in. It's not just a welcome - guests love them so much that sales of the cookies have become an additional revenue stream.

[Four Seasons Hotels](#) - The Four Seasons Hotels have stunning, over-the-top flower arrangements that guests can't resist sharing on social. By creating something so remarkable in every lobby, the Four Seasons has created a signature first impression that they've become known for.

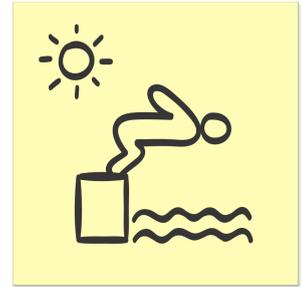
[Park Hyatt Melbourne](#) - Mr Walker, a blonde Labrador, works in the hotel's concierge team to welcome guests enthusiastically. Arriving guests love to give him pats, ear scratches, and belly rubs. As well as being an official ambassador of Guide Dogs of Australia, his primary job is to be of assistance to any guests at the Park Hyatt that are blind or vision-impaired. He even has his own hashtag - [#BarkHyattMelbourne](#).

It doesn't have to be a chocolate chip cookie or an over-the-top flower arrangement; any hotel or experience can create something that fits into their niche that a guest will want to remark on.

Trigger questions:

- What does our first impression look like?
- Are there any friction points in our first impression?
- What would surprise and delight our arriving guests?

In residence: how high is high?



When Gamal Aziz was the General Manager of the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, he became known for looking at every element of the hotel's operations, from the restaurants and entertainment to gambling, the spa, hotel rooms, conventions and retail, and finding ways to maximize the revenue.

He would look at each item and ask 'how high is high?' In other words, what would this experience look like, if it were fully optimised?

The restaurants at the MGM were already great. They had a great flagship offering, Gatsby's, that was doing \$2.1 million a year in sales - a great number. But, Aziz would stand in the entrance of the hotel night after night. He'd see people coming out of the hotel and getting into cabs. He'd ask them, where are you going? They would name a celebrity restaurant like Spago or Nobu.

The MGM Grand was, at the time, the largest hotel in the world. Aziz knew that if they had a restaurant with a celebrity chef that they could be doing \$5 million a year instead of \$2 million. In his eyes, they were losing \$3 million a year because their restaurants only earned \$2 million.

He got the board to agree to rip out the restaurant and replace it with Nobhill, featuring celebrity chef Michael Mina.

The first year after opening they did \$6.5 million. Aziz then did the same thing with every hotel feature. When they got rid of their show and partnered with Cirque du Soleil, they went from \$15 million in ticket sales to \$90 million.

With a properly aligned businesses, you can even turn elements of your business that are currently a cost centre into a profit centre.

Channel your inner Aziz and ask yourself, *how high is high?*

Examples:

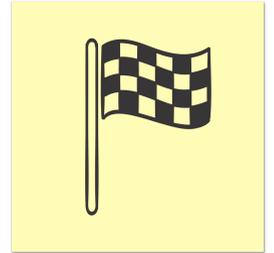
[Heritage Suite Hotel](#) - [Heritage Adventures](#) is Heritage Suites Hotel's own boutique tour company located inside the hotel. Catering almost exclusively to their guests, they provide packages and custom experiences that are a great way to increase revenue and create remarkable experiences for guests.

[Gaggan](#) - One of Asia's most famous restaurants, Gaggan has won Asia's Best Restaurant for three consecutive years, while picking up two Michelin stars. Their famous tasting menus chart around 25 courses of Indian, Japanese and Thai flavours skewed beyond all recognition into everything from Minion ice pops to lumps of coal. For many years Gaggan created a buzz amongst their core target market by being so over the top and remarkable.

[Netanya Noosa](#) - The resort turned their barely-used conference room on the ground floor into a major profit centre by turning it into a gourmet food and drink shop. [Providore on Hastings](#) is the place to stock up on gourmet groceries, coffee, and fresh meals to take away. It's also a great way for the Netanya to reduce friction and increase revenue, by adding on a ready-made food basket for guests when they book, so guests will have everything they need waiting for them in their room, upon arrival.

Trigger questions:

- What raving compliments do we want to receive for our current experience?
- How high is high in our current experience?
- Do we have any underutilised assets that we can turn into a revenue generator?
- Have we created 'Instagram worthy' experiences for our guests?
- What partnerships can we have in place, to deliver a breakthrough experience?
 - Any strategic alliances with non-competitors?
 - Can we cooperate with our competitors?
 - Can we do a joint venture to develop a new business?
- How strong is the network effect of our experience?
- How difficult is it for our competitors to copy our experience?
- What additional revenue streams can we add or create?
- Which key resources do we have, that could significantly increase the guest experience?
- Are there any cross-selling opportunities with partners?
- Could a greater collaboration with partners help us provide a better guest experience?
- How can we prototype a new guest experience?
- What quality levels do guests expect? How can we exceed this?
- What can we offer guests that they would find priceless?
- How can we achieve a near perfect experience?
- Do we outperform the competition substantially in one or several dimensions?
- Is our experience easy or nearly impossible to copy?
- What remarkable experience are guests really willing to pay for?



Checkout: the peak-end

The peak-end rule is a psychological phenomenon in which people judge an experience largely based on how they felt at its peak (i.e. its most intense point) and at its end, rather than the total sum or average of every moment of the experience.

This means that the checkout is a key moment in the key experience - but it's the part that is most often overlooked. How can you end the guest experience on a high?

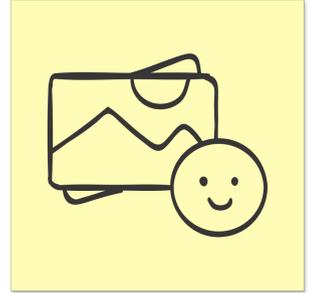
Example:

[Freycinet Experience Walk](#) - The checkout experience on the Freycinet Experience Walk includes a beautiful meal, served outside ceremoniously so that you and your fellow walkers can recount stories of your experience.

Trigger questions:

- What can we do to end on a bigger high?
- Are we making our guest's departure frictionless?

Post-departure: reliving your visit



The final element in the DURING unit is the post-departure phase.

This is another opportunity to surprise and delight your guests/ customers with more than just a receipt.

Examples:

[Freycinet Experience Walk](#) - At Freycinet Experience Walk every guest receives an email with a photo taken of the group during the final meal, as well as a map of their journey and recipes from the meals they enjoyed.

Trigger questions:

- Do we have a mechanism to capture any potential negative feedback before they are posted on review sites?
- Is it easy for departing guests to leave reviews?
- Can we prompt our departing guests to post their best content using our handles and hashtags?
- How do our guests leave our experience changed?

| THE GUEST EXPERIENCE MAP™ | | Date | Page |
|---------------------------|--|------|------|
| BEFORE | | | |
| DURING | | | |
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The AFTER unit

The AFTER unit focuses on making departing guests part of the family and earning lifetime fans.

In the AFTER unit, the focus is on nurturing lifetime relationships with your guests, both to compel them to return, recommend you in a way that makes them look good and send more perfect guests your way.

Make departing guests part of the family



If the experience in the DURING unit is remarkable, it will also naturally be marketable. But a breakthrough is to turn your departing guest into lifetime fans that become part of the family.

Examples:

[Saffire Freycinet](#) - allows guests to adopt a Tasmanian devil; these guests get regular updates on the devils, and it creates a bond with each guest in a truly authentically Tasmanian way.

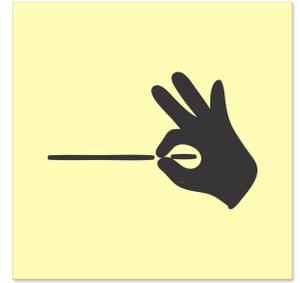
[The Ace Hotel](#) - Most post-stay email communications are, quite frankly, dull, but there are a few hotels that are masters of the art. The Ace Hotel chain keeps former guests informed on everything cool, including an annual book recommendation list from staff that comes out at the New Year.

[XVA Art Hotel](#) - Little branches are taken off the tree in the courtyard and let them continue to grow in small vases on each table. When the branches grow their own roots they are offered to departing guests. Now the XVA has extended roots all over the world.

Trigger questions:

- Instead of asking for a review, could we ask our ideal guest for advice on our experience?
- What can we do to make departing guests part of our family for at least 25 years?
- What post-visit relationship do our departing guests expect? How can we exceed this?
- Who are our evangelists?
- What stories do we most want our guests to share the most, about our experience?

Orchestrate referrals



The AFTER unit could be the least expensive part of your marketing mix, because you know that, on some level, if you provide a great experience, it's a sure thing that some of your guests are going to be repeat or referrals. Most of the time that's just happening in an un-orchestrated way. In other words, it's just happening accidentally.

When businesses do attempt to orchestrate referrals it's usually in a way that benefits them and not the guest. For example, asking guests to 'like' their Facebook page, or to write a good review on TripAdvisor.

A guest is more likely to refer your experience in a way that supports their own self interest. They do it because it makes them feel good.

Even in the smallest social situations, we're wired to want to recommend and refer things to people.

If you go see a great movie, read a great book, go to a great restaurant, meet a great massage therapist or enjoy any of the things that create a really great experience, you want to tell people about that.

We're wired to spread good stories, especially if it makes us seem like we're in the know.

Orchestrate opportunities that make your guests look good.

Examples:

[My Sydney Detour](#) - provides customised Sydney tours in a vintage Holden car - and host Richard Graham orchestrates the perfect Instagram shoot for guests by taking them to a secret spot where guests can capture their unique experience.

[Capella Lodge](#) - provides postcards that include their social media handles, but also points out where to take the best shots for your own profiles, making it easy to both share the experience and to tell others about it.

Trigger questions:

- Are we passively hoping for referrals or are we orchestrating them?
- How can we orchestrate the perfect 'Instagram shoot' for our guests?
- Can we orchestrate opportunities for our guests to look good?
- Do our guests use our handles and hashtags when sharing our experience?

What to do next

Download your own GEM

You can find a fresh copy at thegem.com/map

Get one-on-one help

If you'd like to work with me directly, send me an email with 'one-on-one' in the subject line and tell me a little about your experience and what you'd like to work on together, and I'll get you all the details.

Run a live GEM workshop

If you're a part of a destination marketing team and you're interested in collaborating to host a GEM workshop in your destination, please do get in touch.

Seen a gem in the wild?

If you're reading this, chances are you're a well-travelled individual. Seen any great gems in your travels that we should include? Please do share, and we'll include the best ones.

Feedback

I'd love to hear about your own breakthroughs, using the GEM. Tools like this can only improve when people use them and share their feedback, so I hope you and your team will experiment with it and tell me how it's working for you, and how it might be improved.

Now go on and create some breakthroughs!

Jesse

Jesse Desjardins
jesse@fwnation.com

