Experiential Tourism: Sharing Your Stories

Translating Stories into Compelling Value Propositions and Marketing Platforms

Presented by: Linda DiMario
Define yourself, tell your story
Or someone will do it for you!
Where to start...

• Recognize that you have the means to manage and influence how your stories are told.

• Recognize that you have the power to frame your stories in ways that will move people, persuade people and attract people.

• Recognize that you have the power to leverage these stories and experiences to create an “experience” that you want to share with others.

• Recognize that these “experiences” can be affordably marketed to attract new dollars.

• Recognize that these dollars can generate incremental revenue streams for yourself and your communities.
What is Experiential Tourism?
Experiential Tourism

- Touch
- Sound
- Sight
- Smell
- Feel
Start from the beginning...

• Inventory every asset in your environment!
  • People
  • Work
  • Tools
  • Crafts
  • Agricultural
  • Human Experiences
  • History
  • Nature

• Barns
• Environment
• Achievements & Struggle
• Famous People
• Legends & Ghosts
• Inventions
• Notorious Events
• Natural & Man-made Attractions

And start to build stories...
SEVEN STEPS TO THE PERFECT STORY

From structure and plot to heroes and characters, your story must have everything in place if it’s to connect with the reader.

Follow our guide to storytelling success

1. Understand Your Story

Problem
Question
Opportunity
Challenge
Goal

Middle
(Conflict)

Resolution
(Growth)

Solution
Question answered
Opportunity met
Challenge met
Goal met

The call to adventure
Ordinary life...

Beginning
Transformation?

Closure
“Life” resumes

End
• Set the Stage
• Identify the Challenge
• Describe the Conflict
• Describe the Reckoning
• Identify the Lesson or Solution
### 3 Choose Your Hero

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Willing Hero</th>
<th>Unwilling Hero</th>
<th>Cynical Anti-hero</th>
<th>Tragic Anti-hero</th>
<th>Group-oriented Hero</th>
<th>Loner Hero</th>
<th>Catalyst Hero</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>King Arthur</td>
<td>Bilbo Baggins</td>
<td>Han Solo</td>
<td>Lestat</td>
<td>CuChulainn</td>
<td>Indiana Jones</td>
<td>Any mentor</td>
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<td>Hercules,</td>
<td>(The Hobbit)</td>
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<td>(Ann Rice's</td>
<td>(Irish myth)</td>
<td>Xena</td>
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<td>Leela</td>
<td>Phillipe Gaston</td>
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<td>Vampire</td>
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<td>hero of their</td>
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<td>(The Fifth</td>
<td>(Ladyhawke)</td>
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<td>Chronicles)</td>
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<td>Element)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Darth Vader</td>
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<td>(Star Wars)</td>
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![Character illustration](image)
• Your characters must be defined in a way that people can identify with them and relate to them.
• Your non-human characters will resonate better when you define their behaviors in “human” terms.
• Your inanimate objects and things need to be described in human terms to create an emotional connection.
• It’s a magic number for the brain.
• It is reinforced in daily lives.
• It is easy to remember.
7 Observe The Golden Rule

“Don't give the audience 4, give them 2 plus 2”

Andrew Stanton, Director, WALL-E
How can this work for West Virginia and its Counties?

Tap into what already lives in you and through you!
You are already making progress...

- Hatfield-McCoy ATV Trails
- Hospitality heritage
- Crafts & Music
- Legends & Lore
- So, now what?
Build on your existing platforms...

• What do you know and love?
• What are you proud of and want to share?
• What are you willing to share with others?
• What “connects” you with other towns and counties that you can build together?
• What can you agree to do together?
KEEP MOVING FORWARD
The stories are there – find them...

• The story must be or feel authentic.
• The story must have some drama.
• The story must be relatable.
• The story must bring the audience into the scene.
• The story must have some familiar characteristics.
• The story must be simple enough to attract attention but complex enough to discern the meaning for themselves.
Connect the dots...

• Collect and curate the stories under the story-headlines.
• Where there is critical mass – drill deeper and develop more.
• Where there is opportunity to consolidate complimentary story lines – do so.
• Where there is alignment with other communities’ stories – consider collaboration.
Hatfield-McCoy Trails: Anchor & Magnet

Needs:
• Accommodations
• Eating & dining
• Local shopping
• Affinity experiences...
Boone County

• 1. John Henry
   John Henry Days festival.

• 2. Mary Draper Ingles
   Kanawha State Forest, the New River Gorge or on the AEP conservation tract in Putnam County.

• 3. Johnny Appleseed
   West Virginia’s 2 native apple varieties can be traced back to American pioneer John Chapman. Celebrate this tasty fruit every fall at the Clay County Golden Delicious Festival.

• 4. Daniel Boone
   Daniel Boone Park in Charleston and Boone County.

• 5. Belle Boyd
   Belle Boyd House and Civil War Museum in Martinsburg.

• 6. Devil Anse Hatfield
   Stop by the Tug Valley Chamber of Commerce in Williamson and pick up a driving guide to feud sites, which include the Hatfield Family Cemetery. Devil Anse’s grave is marked with a life-sized marble sculpture imported from Italy.
Lincoln County

- Quilting
- Barn Art

Isolated by the tightness of the hills, settlers developed strong family and community ties. These survive even now, when an upgraded WV State Route 10 and the recent construction of US Route 119 have facilitated access to and from the county. The 22,000 residents of Lincoln County’s 453 square miles are proud and protective of their beautiful hills and "hollers" and of the wildlife that thrives here. While some reach out to the benefits of modern technology, others jealously guard the simple lifestyle still possible among these serene and comforting hills.
McDowell County

Welch, the trading center for surrounding coal fields, is the seat of government for McDowell County. The town was settled in 1885 by John Henry Hunt. He sold it for $40 to I.A. Welch, for whom the town is named, and J.H. Bramwell and J.H. Juring. They platted the town in 1893 and it was incorporated in 1894.

Furs and ginseng were the chief products of the area, until the Norfolk and Western Railroad was built in 1891, which opened up the coal fields. Until 1880 there were no bridges across the streams and rivers, making transportation very difficult.

During the Civil War, to protect the county records the county seat was moved to an area called Tug River, then to Perryville, now called English. After the war a bitter fight ensued, but the county seat was eventually brought back to Welch. A new courthouse was built in 1895.

James McDowell, who served as Governor of Virginia from 1843 until 1846, is honored by the naming of McDowell County, which was formed in 1858. The county consists of some 538 square miles of land area in southwestern part of the state.
Greenbrier County
Monroe County

- Covered bridges
- Barns
- Rural countryside
- Festivals
- Boar hunt
Take your “event” and make it an “experience”.

Passive to Active
Event: Wild Edibles Festival, Hillsboro

• The Wild Edibles Festival is Saturday, April 2nd at the Hillsboro Public Library and Hillsboro Elementary School, located on Rt. 219 in Pocahontas County.

• Workshops and nature walks will be held on Saturday; registration at 9:00 a.m. in the school cafeteria; workshops and walks begin at 10 a.m.

• Saturday’s activities will include vendors, all with a nature theme. You may purchase wild edibles soups, wraps and teas for lunch.

• Some classes and all nature walks will admit a limited number of participants. You may sign up for these Friday evening or during registration on Saturday morning.

• The Festival is free, including no vendor fee. More information and request for a schedule: ssmpdawson@gmail.com
Experience: Wild Edibles Festival

• Eat those weeds and field flowers – they’re good for you! From the area’s hills, hollers, woods and fields, The Wild Edibles Festival promises to immerse you in wild and wacky edibles!

• Get your hands dirty in workshops and enjoy the serenity of our nature walks that will bring you face-to-face with food you have probably overlooked or maybe even stepped on! Vendors (name them) will transform these “weeds” into nature’s unusual taste treats in salads, soups, sandwiches, wraps, teas and desserts.

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Event: John Henry Days

John Henry Days is an annual 3 day festival held on the second weekend of July. The festival starts on Friday night with a concert at the stage near the Great Bend Tunnel and ends on Sunday with the Rubber Duck Race at the Talcott bridge.
Experience: John Henry Days

• John Henry was a man with a will of steel. Just like those of us who live here and still hammer it out everyday.

• Don’t miss our 3 day annual festival, the second weekend of July when we salute this legendary folk hero who shared our “will of steel”! Starting Friday night with a folk-rock concert at the Great Bend Tunnel stage, the festival invites everyone to test their strength and wits in (name the games and tournaments and activities). Ending with the Rubber Duck Race at the Talcott Bridge on Sunday, you’ll find food, fun and legends abound!
Examples

Rural Cities & Communities Making It Work.
It's in our nature to inspire!

Home / Nature

Nature

You are entering a region formed by ancient and ongoing geological movement, a land of stunning bird migrations, and of richly layered human history. From ripping wheat fields to hundreds of thousand of shorebirds alighting the skies - everywhere you look, you will see evidence of motion and change.
Story Telling

- Corvette Plant
- Rolling Hills
- Caves

“Pioneers”
- Lake & Outdoors
- Old Main Street
Tips

• Find your stories.
• Focus on your strengths.
• Optimize and leverage your existing assets – festivals, events.
• Build critical mass - combine forces and resources.
• Tell your stories over and over and over again...repetition is an essential marketing strategy.
• Prepare to share your stories in-person ...make memorable experiences for every visitor to your area – they will tell 10, 100 or 1,000 people about it!
Tell your story and invite visitors to share your West Virginia!