

## **Lead the Experience**

Randy G. Pennington

Destination here. Discover there. Choose some place else. It seems as if every community wants to lure out-of-town sales tax revenue.

Here's a hint: Potential visitors to your community are asking three questions: Why you? Why now? What makes you relevant to my needs and wants today. The answer to these questions communicates your brand.

Your brand is a promise made and a promise delivered. It isn't your slogan or tag line—those are simply communication tools. Austin was keeping it weird long before anyone coined the slogan. And, Fort Worth was all about cowboys and culture before it used the words in its tag line. Some of the best brands don't even use a tag line or slogan—think Google or Starbucks.

You create the experience, but the customer owns the brand. Here are three things you can do to define yourself in the marketplace:

1. **Define the Vision:** Be crystal clear on whom you want to attract and the experience you want them to have. Amarillo doesn't draw the same visitors as Galveston and vice versa. The key question in determining your place as a destination is "For whom to do what?"
2. **Be amazing with your execution:** Fundamentals are the minimum in today's competitive world. Being distinctive is the difference. Everyone with whom you are competing delivers about the same level of service and value. To stand out, you must be amazing.
3. **Protect and enhance the experience:** There are people who return to Disney World every year. That's because Disney consistently replicates the experience that initially hooked the customer and then enhances it with something new. Past

success proves you were right once, and you must re-earn your visitor's attention every day.

People have been traveling and exploring forever. Our country was founded as a destination. The question for leaders is why should others visit you? Make the experience meaningful, and the reason will be self-evident.

*Randy Pennington helps leaders create cultures focused on results, relationships, and accountability. He is author of Results Rule! Build a Culture that Blows the Competition Away, and On My Honor, I Will: Leading with Integrity in Changing Times. For additional information contact via telephone at 972/980-9857; e-mail at [Randy@penningtongroup.com](mailto:Randy@penningtongroup.com) or on the World Wide Web at <http://www.penningtongroup-cities.com> or <http://www.resultsrule.com>.*

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