

**/YOUR CUSTOMERS WILL ONLY VALUE YOUR SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS IF YOU MAKE IT FUN AND YOU COMMUNICATE IT WITH PASSION BUT WITHOUT MAKING THEM FEEL GUILTY/
SIMON ASHE, BALLYNAHINCH CASTLE/**

**/BEING GREEN IS NO LONGER JUST AN ETHICAL CHOICE,
IT IS A BUSINESS NECESSITY/**



Fáilte Ireland
National Tourism Development Authority

WHY SHOULD I, IF NOBODY IS ASKING ME FOR IT?

If you're already working hard to be green, it's time to find out how to make your customers aware of this - and enjoy it.

Your customers might not choose you because you have a waste management or renewable energy system, but there are ways to make green meaningful to clients, recognising that authenticity makes your customers' holidays more fun and their business trips more pleasant.

Companies across Ireland are changing to be green - but are shy to tell their customers, for fear it's not relevant, or will be misunderstood. Some have even got awards and certification but still struggle to know how this can be used to best effect. It's time to do something about it!

Note: It's important to note this toolkit is designed to help you communicate your environmental sustainability, so throughout this toolkit the words 'sustainable' and 'green' refer to environmental management issues only.

Five chapters help you make practical decisions:

- > **Who do I tell?** Are customers really bothered? Isn't it only a minority?
- > **Why am I telling?** Can I get more customers? How can I get them to join in, rather than undermine my efforts?
- > **What do I say?** Should I say I am green, just like that? Isn't that preaching?
- > **Where do I tell?** Should I get certified or apply for awards? Talk about being green on my website or through social media?
- > **When do I tell?** Can I tell customers before they arrive, or only when they are here?

Get tips and confidence to market your green credentials, by understanding who you tell, for what purpose and through which channels, and more importantly that you know what you're saying is really worth shouting about.

Use the template at the end of this booklet to prepare your own green communications and marketing action plan, one step at a time. For each market, choose one reason, one message, one channel and one time to tell them.



WHO IS THIS BOOKLET FOR?



Kevin Currid

It's for all the businesses that behave sustainably because it's the right thing to do, but have struggled to see how to turn it into a commercial advantage.

Introducing: Kevin Currid, who has been developing creative outdoor adventure experiences at his adventure centre on the shores of Lough Allen for the last ten years. Kevin is innovative in helping customers understand and appreciate the environment.



Lough Allen

What we do: "There is no doubt about it, marketing ourselves as an eco-tourism¹ destination has given us masses of media coverage. We've had writers, journalists, and television crews reviewing us because we are seen as eco-friendly.

We do not market ourselves as eco-warriors. Appreciating the environment that we work in is just part of what we do. Twenty years ago we were already pedalling these ideas.

Lough Allen Adventure Centre uses renewable technologies and all the wilderness activities are carried out according to minimal impact codes of practice. We also offer packages which focus on getting people in touch with their environment. Rather than scaring clients away Kevin believes that "nowadays, increasingly promoting yourself as eco-friendly definitely brings publicity to your business".

¹ Ecotourism refers to 'responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well being of the local people' (The International Ecotourism Society, 1990).



> WHO DO I TELL?

WHO WILL APPRECIATE KNOWING YOU
ARE WORKING TO BE GREEN?

TELL EVERYBODY THAT GREEN IS QUALITY AND HOW THEY CAN HAVE A BETTER EXPERIENCE FOR IT.

There are many signs that consumers are changing. The increasing awareness and concern for the planet's environment is everywhere - but the problems are too big and complex, there are too many issues, we have all heard too many contradictory messages. It's not surprising customers struggle to know what to do.

Most customers care, or at least want to know that they are not doing harm. But this does not mean they will act differently. Just as we all forget to bring our stylish recycled bags to the supermarket, customers will book the brands they already know through their usual channels. Habit and convenience play a more important part in how we choose travel, leisure and tourism.

Price, location, convenience and brand still come first for most people. But when all of these are equal, environmental values and

actions can and do differentiate a product. Consumers prefer brands and companies that are environmentally and socially responsible - but that doesn't mean they are searching exclusively for this at the time of choosing.



In 2008 Fáilte Ireland under took a survey of visitor attitudes to green tourism with the following interesting findings:

- 71% of visitors come to Ireland for the 'unspoilt environment'
- 52% of visitors to Ireland would seek to stay in accommodation that has reduced it's environmental impacts
- 35% think about the environmental impact of their holiday when booking.

Britain is the largest market for tourists to Ireland so what do they think about the importance of being green.

2010 VISIT ENGLAND DATA ON ENGLISH CONSUMERS SAYS:

58% would want to stay in accommodation with green awards/environmentally friendly practices.

51% say that if two hotels were the same, they would choose the one with a green award.

46% don't want to think about being green - they want to relax.

33% believe sustainability claims are often ways to save money and/or reduce service.

Only **15%** think a hotel run sustainably will be less comfortable than one without green credentials.

BE CREATIVE



Martyn Bell



Gleninchaquin Park



Introducing: Martyn Bell. He is the Artistic Director of Gleninchaquin Park, a 1500 acre park and farm in South Kerry. Along with the owners Mr and Mrs Corkery, Martyn is continuously coming up with new ways to engage his visitors in environmental education and green practices; so much so that people come back again and again just to see what is going on.

What we do: “We have restored an 18th century traditional Irish cottage for educational purposes, university graduates have conducted field surveys on the cultural and natural heritage in the park, boards have been erected with information on the flora and fauna as well as suggested walks.”

Most innovative of all is the way that they interact with younger visitors: the eye-spy trail is where children are given a list of flora, fauna and interesting objects to spot

on their walk, art classes for children are on offer that include children interacting with their natural surroundings, there is the opportunity to bottle feed the orphaned lambs or watch them being sheared in summer and recently a group of children each planted their own acorns and are looking forward to coming back to see how they are getting on.

Our top tip: “Talk to your visitors, answer their questions and explain what you are doing. In this way you won’t preach environmentalism to them but make it more fun and accessible. People will remember and appreciate the chat.”





REAL CASE STUDIES

BE IMAGINATIVE

Introducing: Anthony Maloney, the General Manager of Garryvoe Hotel in Ballycotton Bay, Co. Cork.

What we do: “We have a small number of staff members so that any green initiative we implement has to be simple.” In light of this, Garryvoe have come up with innovative ways of interacting with their visitors about green issues. “As well as a ‘Do Not Disturb’ notice in the rooms we have a ‘Do not turn down my room’ notice ‘instead donate the time and therefore money that would have been spent on this to planting a tree’. On the back of the card are simple ideas as to how the client can have a green stay and an explanation of the present awards the hotel has received and their environmental aims for the future.”

Additionally, after a guests stay, Garryvoe market themselves through Facebook. “Recently we ran a competition on our Facebook page where clients were asked to come up with ways in which the hotel could become greener. The winner won a free night at the hotel, her idea was to use tinfoil underneath the ironing board covers, this reduces the time spent ironing and decreases energy used.

Our top tip: “Do not overburden people, keep it simple.”



DIFFERENT CUSTOMERS, DIFFERENT APPROACHES

'Ethical seekers' actively seek green holidays as a continuation of their lifestyle. There are few of them, but they are vocal and loyal. They want to know all about what you do.

At the other extreme, the "just want to switch off" group travel wanting to forget about their daily lives and responsibilities. They are unlikely to value your efforts. Environmental actions will need to happen behind the scenes and your communication should focus on what it does to improve their experience.

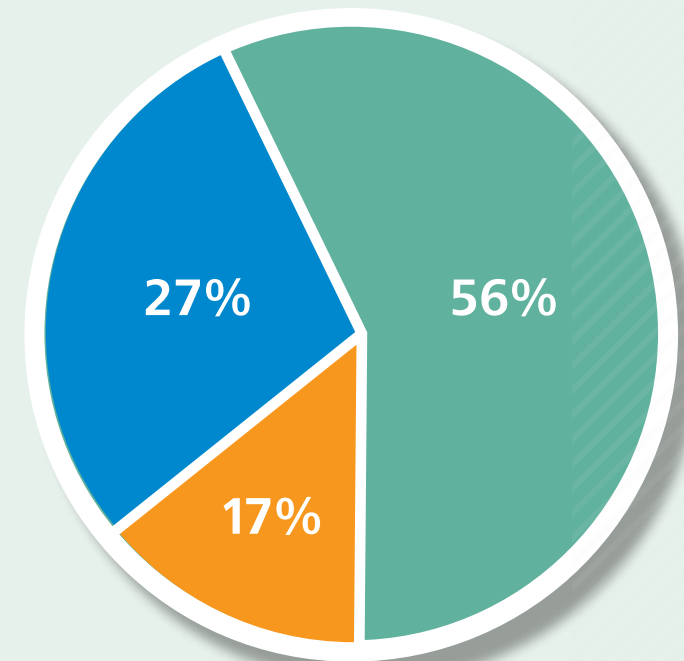
The "feel good factor" group is the majority - they are aware of the issues, but don't go out of their way to act. They won't seek information, but will respond well to messages that show they can easily "do their bit" - or where they get a better product or service that happens to be green.

This group will avidly read about you in the press travel pages because you are interesting and different, not because you are green. Awards and certification reinforce that you can be trusted, one more element to influence the booking decision.

17% **Ethical Seekers:**
Rational, Interrogative,
Willing to Pay

56% **Feel Good Factors:**
Emotional, Simplified,
Unlikely to pay

27% **Switch off:**
Irrelevant, Cynical, Won't Pay



> WHY AM I TELLING?

THERE ARE TOO MANY VAGUE MESSAGES OUT THERE. YOU CAN'T DO EVERYTHING, SO BE CLEAR ABOUT WHAT RESPONSE OR CHANGE YOU ARE HOPING FOR FROM YOUR CUSTOMERS.

TO MAKE CUSTOMERS FEEL GOOD



Leitrim Landscapes Walks

Ok, you want more customers - but before you get there, remember there are many other more realistic ways of using the green message in your communications.

Help your customers feel better about their purchase by showing how you have taken care of the need to be green - leaving them to enjoy the benefits.

The fact they will not go out of their way to buy from you because you are green does not mean they don't appreciate it. It won't put customers off, and can make them feel good knowing that they are "doing their bit."

If you genuinely think your customers don't want to know, focus on what you do for them. Make it easy, by telling them they can relax and enjoy, while you take care of things without compromising quality.



Customers feel good (or less guilty) facing easy choices. Encourage charitable donations, tell them about public transport options or where to recycle - show them it is better. The easiest solution of all is for the options provided to be 'good' choices with positive impacts.

Leitrim Landscapes Walks offer specialised walks in Co. Leitrim, tailored to discover and showing the local hidden gems of the county. Guests appreciate the educational and environmental side of the walks, but what they look for is a unique experience, which is provided by "keeping it local".

Walks include information on the local biodiversity, folklore history and culture; the foraging walks instead offer cooking tips and information on the use of wild medicinal herbs.





REAL CASE STUDIES

TELL US ABOUT YOUR SUPPLIERS!

- > A map of where your different suppliers are located can demonstrate how many are local - good.
- > Photos will show a human side to who they are - better.
- > Explaining how they take good care of the produce they sell to you will show that you also care about what you share with your customers - best.

TO PRESERVE THE REAL TASTE

Introducing: Macreddin Village.

Together with my two brothers, we opened The BrookLodge Hotel in 1999 at Macreddin Village in Co. Wicklow. Our emphasis has always been centred round Irish Artisanal Foods and now includes Ireland's only licensed organic restaurant, The Strawberry Tree. The simple commitment to invest in a relationship with the Farmers of our Foods has always been paramount.

What we do: Macreddin Village has made a name as being a stalwart supporter of the producer of artisanal organic and wild foods, and could not survive without these fabulous individual food producers. The hotel has constantly worked at helping this group of food heroes: we showcase them on our menus, we showcase them in dedicated food blogs, we showcase them at our renowned monthly Macreddin village food markets, where our food heroes get to meet, directly with the public.



Summer BBQ at The Brooklodge Hotel

Our top tip: When it comes to food, we have always felt that it should taste, smell and sense that it comes from the area that you are eating it in, the French call it 'terroir', the Italians call it 'locale', here, we call it 'pride of place' and it's what we strive to do constantly.

TO EXTEND GUESTS STAY

Introducing: Dermot Madigan,
General Manager at Mulranny Park Hotel
in Co. Mayo.

What we do: The Great Western Greenway, opened in 2010, is the longest off-road walking and cycling trail in Ireland, running from Westport to Achill Island. "Along with several Mayo food producers we have capitalised on this route by devising the Gourmet Greenway food trail, which highlights the great selection of food producers near to and along the route of the Great Western Greenway. We produced a map and information leaflet which is handed out to guests who are encouraged to visit, sample and purchase the fare of the producers along the Gourmet Greenway. We hand out the maps at reception, in the restaurant and in press packs."



The benefits for us: "Visiting the local producers while cycling or walking along the Greenway will hopefully contribute to guests extending their stay as this is another activity to take part in."



TO RAISE AWARENESS AND CHANGE BEHAVIOUR

Are you fed up of having all your good environmental work undermined by customers that just don't get it?

If you want change, give something in return. Whether you want them to purchase local or respect local customs, to drive less or recycle more, be clear how to motivate and be positive.

- > Be specific about what you ask them to do: vague messages lead to frustration – inform them what they can do, not “be green.”
- > Show how the action you are asking your customers to take has a direct positive impact, of what kind, and how it can be seen - instead of saying “save water,” tell them what can be done with the water they have saved.
- > Explain who benefits from the change of behaviour - if it isn't the customer, think again how you tell why they should care.

- > Only mention the greener options - focus on daytrips that are nearby rather than hours away, or cut out endangered or unsustainable food from the menu. There is no need to label as “green” either, just present as fun or a great idea.

After booking a walk with *Heart of Burren Walks* (Co. Clare), tourists are recommended to read the Burren Code, a set of guidelines designed to inform people about appropriate behaviour when visiting these protected areas. After the walks, a thank you email is sent on behalf of the environmental charities supported through the earnings from the walks, to remind clients how they contributed in protecting the Burren National Park. Heart of Burren Walks is certified by Ecotourism Ireland.

OR DO YOU WANT YOUR CURRENT CUSTOMERS TO DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY AND THEREFORE MULTIPLY THE POSITIVE DIFFERENCE YOU ARE MAKING THROUGH YOUR EXISTING ACTIONS?

***Airfield* (Dundrum, Co. Dublin), a 35 acre working farm and formal gardens, recently introduced Sustainable Saturdays - this is a once monthly day of learning to grow your own food, or reusing items through swapping and a vintage and craft market. This gets people to engage simply in being green.**



Heart Of Burren walks



TO OFFER SOMETHING EXTRA

We've only looked at your current customers and your main business. Now, how do we get your customers to buy more from you?

Design green packages for your low occupancy or usage periods, or think of services that can generate more money in high season. Look at ways customers will stay longer, or will come back when your business is empty.

- > Develop a nature diary on your website for your property - emphasise what's there in low season.
- > Promote meat/vegetables/jam from your local farm or neighbours - encourage customers to come back to restock.
- > "Grow-and-cook your own veg", local history or bicycle maintenance courses, "eco-warrior" after school clubs, children's nature themed birthday parties... create demand for quieter times.
- > Typically, a rural pub is full lunchtime weekends - develop a special promotion for mid morning or mid afternoon coffee and cake/tea and scone, together with a free map for a circular pub walk.
- > Business hotels can include 30 and 60 minute running maps from the hotel, and design and promote a runner's breakfast with the right nutritional contents - if you are a chain, roll it out across your whole portfolio.
- > You can encourage your customers to report interesting sightings in your guest log. Getting customers to engage makes nature more fun and reinforces your many green actions.





MAKE GREEN MEANINGFUL TO GET YOUR PREFERRED CUSTOMERS TO COME OFF SEASON

Introducing: Cari Ryan and Sonja

The Boghill Centre is a sustainable complex set in 50 acres of land on the edge of the Burren in Co Clare. Our mantra over the years has been to reduce, reuse, recycle and create an environmentally sustainable business having a minimal impact on the earth, but we were not very proactive about communicating this.

What we do:

We recently introduced Eco Experiences. This new programme has been designed to create an awareness of environmental interaction and how to get closer to nature, while including the usual learning activities of the centre (art, traditional Irish music and culture, health therapies).

All activities use resources found on the Boghill estate, while meals are vegetarian and as much food as possible is sourced

from our organic vegetable garden, fruit beds and orchard.

Our customers are more loyal and repeat more often, increasing occupancy rates throughout the year. It also helps us attract customers with the same values that we have.



Boghill Centre: Cari & Sonja

Our top tip: Tell customers where things come from and how they are made, and not only why this is green but also how it is better for you.



TO GET MORE CUSTOMERS

Faced with a similar price and location, your green credentials can give you the edge for both business and leisure markets. It's all about being noticed and giving a bit more.

DO REMEMBER, CUSTOMERS LIKE TO KNOW THEY ARE GETTING A BARGAIN

There are more examples of increased occupancy and lower seasonality through using green creatively, than there are about higher prices. This is probably good news for the service sector, where managing occupancy has a more significant impact on your bottom line than charging more at peak periods.

Businesses that put the suggestions provided in this toolkit into practice should be in a position to increase their prices marginally, or to not reduce them as substantially in low season.

Do remember, customers like to know they are getting a bargain - so showing that behaving green gives them either a discount or additional benefits is likely to be attractive. We have seen cafés giving a discount

(and others putting 10p in a charity pot) for regulars that bring their own commuter mug - saving on disposable cups while gaining a loyal customer. While 2010 data from VisitEngland shows that 60% of holiday-makers would be more likely to use public transport if the accommodation offered a discount for doing so.

Outdoors Ireland (Kerry) is an outdoor adventure and training business that extends their market by providing adventure sports for all ages and all physical abilities. Sighted guides can be provided free of charge and there is no charge for assistants to physically challenged individuals. They believe that people with disabilities or lower levels of fitness have the same rights to an adventurous holiday experience. Being inclusive to all is part of being truly sustainable.





SAY YOU ARE GREEN WITHOUT SOUNDING LIKE AN ECOWARRIOR

Introducing: Teresa O’Hare. Orchard Acre (in Co. Fermanagh) is an award winning small farm, run by Teresa and family, offering heaps of green living activities, especially focused around bringing good organic food “from plot to plate”.

What we do: We run festivals and open days with ‘green themes’, where past and new customers get to have a look at our garden and products, learn new recipes, or simply celebrate the passing of the seasons (for example, the St Brigid’s and the Equinox festivals). We also run eco-events to support local charities, like the annual Green Santa event for our local Hospice. On such open days, information is placed

throughout the farm to help visitors interpret what we do. The events are a great way to engage the local community, to hear back directly from our customers and to get bookings for the longer courses that we run. Clients can also keep in touch online by downloading the ‘recipe of the month’ from our website and we encourage them to send us back photos of their culinary creations, which we plan to publish regularly on the website.



Teresa O’Hare



Open Day

Our top tip: Telling customers what you do to be green is a great way to keep them loyal. They feel that they belong to something and that they are making a positive contribution; they might not choose you in the first place based on such an environmental commitment, but they will certainly remain loyal in the long term once they have been engaged.

> WHAT DO I SAY?

**BE CLEAR ABOUT THE IMPRESSION YOU WANT TO
CREATE WITH YOUR GREEN POLICY, PHOTOS, TEXT...
FROM THE FOLLOWING PAGES, CHOOSE ONE OR TWO
MESSAGES ONLY THAT YOU THINK REPRESENT BEST HOW
YOU WANT YOUR CUSTOMERS TO SEE YOU.**

FUN/PARTICIPATION - WHAT CAN I DO?

Green should not be boring! Help your customers to enjoy themselves and to experience “hands on” what makes you unique.

Have you realised how much mainstream advertising makes fun of being green? In the UK, Sainsbury's wants you to remember to use your own bags by telling you to “Take an Old Bag Shopping” for example. Bottom line, sounding worthy is less likely to sell - you want to tell customers, not put them off.

GET YOUR CUSTOMERS TO PARTICIPATE IN THINGS THEY CAN RELATE TO

Get customers to participate – doing is more fun than observing. The chance for a customer to pick their own lunch means that in their mind, it just tastes better. Develop a family quiz to explore and learn more about the places they visit, or a nature, town or city trail from your front door. Get them to participate in things they can relate to.



BETTER SERVICE - MAKE ME FEEL SPECIAL

Holidays are times to put yourself first, while business travellers will want you to get things right quickly. Some aspects of being green can help.

Text on being green can sound like apologies or jargon. Instead, put the customer at the centre of the experience - what's in it for them? Word your information thinking about how you want your customers to feel, instead of listing your product features or attributes. Write about green as pampering, as having something unique, about looking after your customer. "You can see things nobody else does" is likely to sell, but find a way of showing that the place is still looked after, the "feel good factor." The message "fresh, unadulterated, honest food that makes holidaying memorable" is more likely to sell than "food miles and supporting the local economy." It's both what you say and how you say it that matters.

PUT THE CUSTOMER AT THE CENTRE OF THE EXPERIENCE – WHAT'S IN IT FOR THEM?



GET YOUR CUSTOMERS' HANDS DIRTY

Introducing: Simon Ashe. As the estate and fishery manager, Simon and the team at Ballynahinch Castle passionately believe that they are simply the custodians of the beautiful environment in which they work. They see it as their duty to ensure that they use the natural resources surrounding them sustainably, and they make their customers aware of their work.

What we do: All of our work and projects at Ballynahinch are based around being green. Our carbon neutral wood pellet boiler and solar panel system heat the hotel and our energy usage is comparable with some of Europe's greenest hotels. Our vegetable waste is fed to our own pigs and the remaining organic waste is composted. We are also undertaking a native woodland management programme which has seen the removal of invasive *Rhododendron ponticum* and the planting of over 2,500

hard wood trees. None of that has much meaning unless you tell your customers about it, and help them feel it.

How do we communicate this? One way is by offering our guests the opportunity to plant a native oak tree, grown from seed in the garden nursery, in areas which have been cleared of invasive rhododendrons. They receive a certificate detailing their tree and the event is recorded in our Tree Ledger. Here the guest records when and where they planted the tree and may also enter a dedication, perhaps in memory of a loved one or the celebration of the birth of a child. It is a very personal and satisfying experience.



Our top tip: Telling someone is dry and boring- involving them is far more powerful, and fun. Don't be afraid to engage your customers in your green practices. They will respect you for it.



Ballynahinch Castle



Simon Ashe

EMPATHY - WE THINK ALIKE

The message here is to emphasise the personal connection between host and guest -
“We are people like you, we have the same values, that’s why you’ll enjoy being here.”

You are showing a personal connection, not a bland corporate directive. Say it in words - and with the more informal tone, pictures that show the fun element of your place and contents of your website. Write in the first person, include a photo of yourself as host, explain more about the surroundings - it’s all part of the welcome.

Every time a customer books a holiday or business trip, or choose a day out, there’s an element of risk – what if I have made a mistake?

You can use green messages to assure customers that you are a quality business. Displaying your many awards and quality grading – but assure your customers that because you care about the environment and society, you also care about your customers and how they will enjoy their time with you.

Primrose Valley Hotel’s website (Cornwall, England) communicates environmental values differently, starting with the message “We tried to pretend, but it just didn’t work. We pretended that all the water, energy and fuel we use replenishes itself by magic. We also tried pretending that all the carbon we kick out rises skywards then miraculously turns into refreshing, life-giving showers. Obviously we were wrong, so now we don’t pretend any more...” They then go on to show all the work they do for being green.



COMMON MISTAKES

Customers often think green businesses just want to save money and provide less comfort. The way you write could contribute to that impression.



The corporate market is likely to welcome evidence of lower CO₂ emissions for both conferences and business travel, as many companies have commitments to purchasing services from greener suppliers in their corporate social responsibility statements. But for the leisure market you don't need to use the word "sustainability" or "green" in your marketing, just as you don't always say quality or luxury in those words – find more subtle ways of putting the message across that are meaningful to them. Too many messages aim at making customers feel vaguely warm inside, or less guilty about their travel or day out. Others come across as an apology (we had to do it - but it won't affect you) or a sacrifice (you need to be tough to be green). These won't create trust. But most typically businesses either don't say what they are doing or present it with a complete lack of imagination in a place that

is separate from other communications - as if being green was an afterthought.

AM I GREENWASHING?

- > Before you shout about great actions, make sure there are no obvious mistakes.
- > You'll find that your credentials will be taken as greenwashing if you also use non-recyclable plastic cups and throw away crockery, or have an outdoor patio heater turned on when it is really not needed, for example. Don't try to promote your green policy on chlorinated bleached paper.
- > Futerra's Greenwash Guide will help

www.futerra.com/downloads/Greenwash_Guide.pdf

> **WHERE DO I TELL?**

**INTEGRATE GREEN AS PART OF QUALITY THROUGH THE CHANNELS YOU ALREADY USE.
USE CERTIFICATION AND AWARDS TO GET RECOGNITION,
AND THE INTERNET TO SPREAD THE WORD.**

CERTIFICATION

Certification is a great place to start – you get help to put your house in order and its endorsement should give you confidence to tell others about what you do – now use it as a marketing tool.

Companies get certified partly to gain a marketing advantage, expecting that being certified lifts them above some of their competitors - and yet they report that customer awareness is low.

At the end of the day certification won't market you, it's still your role to know how and where to display certificates and logos, and more importantly what they mean and why you gained them.

Gaining a green tourism certification gives customers an independent guarantee of your credentials. It helps with confidence and credibility. Now you have the independent recognition of your green performance, you should explain what you do with confidence.

DO YOU COMMUNICATE YOUR CERTIFICATION LOGO AND WHAT YOU DID TO ACHIEVE IT?

- > In the reception/entrance
- > In your bedroom pack (if accommodation)
- > On your website
- > On promotional leaflets and printed literature
- > In your public relations work
- > In adverts

The Bush Hotel, in Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim, is the first hotel in Ireland to be awarded the EU flower certification. They use different media to communicate their environmental commitment, especially at community level, to clients: the awards' logos in the homepage links directly to press releases and the environmental policy, which can also be shared with friends through social media; the same information is also

available through an information booklet distributed to all guests on arrival. Also there are numerous local initiatives which help to raise the profile of the hotel such as an anti-litter program funded by the hotel, which gets them advertisement space on the main town roads.

Fáilte Irelands consumer website www.discoverireland.ie/green now has a green section which profiles tourism businesses which have received certification to third party accreditation programmes.



AWARDS

Only a few businesses win awards. You could spend much time on it without any results, and you will need to show something unique and extraordinary.

But if you do win an award, use it to create a sense of confidence and trust in your quality. The good news is that submitting your company for awards doesn't cost you and the recognition lasts much longer.

To enter awards you need to do something outstanding and exemplary - the goalposts change year on year, so seeing a company that won two years ago doing what you do doesn't mean you could also win.

Your job will be not only to display the award in your marketing and in your property, but also to explain why you won it, what's special about you.

Jury's Inn Group have received numerous awards in recognition of their environmental efforts; including the Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland National Award for Energy Management, the Repak National Award for Waste Management and the PODEC Recycling award. The whole Jury's Inn Group is signed up to the Green Tourism Business Scheme.

Taking part in these schemes and receiving awards has raised their profile, giving them recognition of their environmental efforts in many diverse areas and continuously giving them reasons to engage the media.



Jury's Christina Dixon - Gold winner



PRESS

We see interesting stories in the travel pages every week - how can you get your business featured there? By having something different to tell.

Travel editors get bombarded with very similar mailings, claiming to be green. Their question? "What makes you different, in a way that my customers will want to read about you?"

PRESS COVERAGE YOU'VE ACHIEVED SHOULD NOT BE LOST – MAKE LINKS TO IT

Results from the Visitor Attitudes Survey carried out by Fáilte Ireland in 2009 show that 17% of overseas visitors stated that articles in newspapers/magazines influenced their choice to come to Ireland, with 13% stating that such articles also influenced their choice when planning their Irish holiday.

Press coverage you've achieved should not be lost - make links to it from your website, say in your mailings that you have been highlighted, use quotes from the write up

to show your positive side. Even if it is old, there's a value to it. A quote from a national publication could have more impact than a certification scheme that has a lower awareness level.

Chleire Haven Yurts (Co. Cork) has received very good press coverage because of its green ethos in many of the recent articles about glamping, in both the online and printed media. This coverage is priceless in positioning a small company that would otherwise not have the advertising budget.



“A PORTMAGEE GUESTHOUSE HAS STRUCK GOLD IN ITS BID TO GO GREEN”

The Kerryman, March 2010.

The Moorings Pub and Restaurant, in Portmagee Co. Kerry, are extremely proud of their accolade of Gold in the Green Hospitality Awards. They not only engaged the national press but also the local press, to publicise the fact that they are the only Gold GHA business in Kerry. By spreading the word in local newspapers and on local radio they improved their profile locally.



The Moorings Pub and Restaurant





YOUR WEBSITE

All too often a missed opportunity. Let me feel you mean it, show me what's good about what you do, keep it up to date.

You typically have all your environmental information on a single page, probably called environmental or green. Mostly we see dull lists of water, waste, and energy actions, written in management speak – I'm hardly going to pick up the phone because I've read that you "minimise waste by evaluating operations and ensuring they are fit for purpose.

By all means upload your policy and list your achievements somewhere, but in general you won't get many customers visiting it. There are of course exceptions... but you need to get more creative.

The environmental aspects that directly relate to quality, as customers would perceive it, need to be incorporated throughout the website. Describe a quieter and warmer (better insulated, biomass fuelled heating) bedroom, a tastier (locally sourced) menu,

a more personally and uniquely designed (with local crafts) hotel...

PICTURES SELL MORE THAN WORDS

Ard Nahoo is an eco-retreat centre located in Co. Leitrim, featuring healthy living and "the ideal sustainable place", according to the owner Noeleen, who went through a type of therapy with her architect to create the eco-cabins.

The website offers a flickr gallery with photos of the cabins to show all their natural features (and also links to the facebook profile); it really encourages guests to "retreat" here, with an extremely detailed list of activities to do onsite, also offering a free treatment to those arriving by public transport!

www.ardnahoo.com/photo_gallery.php



Ard Nahoo website



EACH MARKET NEEDS DIFFERENT COMMUNICATION METHODS

Compare two websites speaking about being green very differently. Each has understood their market, and has presented their green credentials in context.



The relationship between *Trinity Island Lodge, in Co. Cavan*, and its natural surroundings is evident from the first glance at their website. The soft natural colours, the logo reminiscent of ancient Celtic designs, the uncluttered style of the site and the clear explanations in the text; give the viewer an immediate understanding that this is a green lodge with sophisticated class. They devote whole tabs on their menu bar to describing the natural amenities on the Island and the local waterways and high quality images of nature are seen throughout the site. The target market for their website is clearly a more sophisticated customer.

www.trinityisland.com



In comparison *Glenribbeen Eco Lodge Bed & Breakfast* is not afraid to promote their eco-activities in a more informal and fun fashion. Their strap line emphasises that they provide 'a holiday experience without the footprint' and they call themselves an Eco lodge. They even include a video of Peter, the owner, clucking away happily to his chickens on their homepage.

www.glenribbeen.com





SOCIAL MEDIA

Like it or not, this is a digital world. So get used to blogging, Twitter, Facebook and other social networks to tell others what you are up to - eventually you will find these quite addictive!

If you have something interesting to say and you are internet savvy, you will develop a group of followers. Many social media sites are free, and your local tourism partnership is likely to run or know about training available in your area.

Músaem Chorca Dhuibhne relies heavily on their Facebook page to promote themselves their efforts to promote Irish culture and sense of pride. As a small organisation with few staff members, this social media facility allows them to update information and inform patrons of events with relative ease and no cost.



Updating their website would take more time and effort. Making the most of their Facebook site they include images of the natural surroundings of their museum; provide links to news, books and events; and initiate discussions on protecting Irish cultural heritage.



CHECK WHAT OTHERS WRITE ABOUT YOU

It's not only what you say, but how you say it... so do your entries on tourist board websites or destination guides actually do you proud? Research shows that the photo, name and first sentence of your text are the most typical reasons to click through. But then you need to make sure that your text is attractive too!

Compare these two extremes for a hotel, one written on their website, the other on a third party site. When third parties write about your hotel, try to give them something a bit more exciting to say!

WHAT TO DO!

"All of us are very proud of the fact that we make everything here ourselves, from jams and honey to bread and soups..." is telling us something about your values and it's speaking to the customer - without having to say "hey, I am sustainable" in that many words. Talking in terms of "you" and "we" rather than the third person also helps.

WHAT NOT TO DO!

"Hotel X will take environmental considerations into account in all its activities. Although ultimate responsibility rests with management, all staff have a part to play in minimising adverse effects on the environment. To that end Hotel X will promote the best use of environmental practices. Hotel X will develop and resource programmes for the implementation of its Environmental Policy and will monitor and audit them through an environmental management system."



WHEN DO I TELL?

YOU ACTUALLY MARKET YOUR COMPANY ALL THE TIME. SO THINK ABOUT THE MANY DIFFERENT STAGES YOU CAN COMMUNICATE AND HOW WHAT YOU SAY HELPS CUSTOMERS TAKE DECISIONS AT THAT POINT.

PRIOR TO BOOKING/PURCHASE

Tell customers why they should buy from you. Explain why your product is better value, better quality, or simply a more appealing proposition, because of the environmental work you do.

Customers need information to help them make decisions. This may be the number of calories in a cup of tea compared to a skinny latte, but it could also be public transport deals or the CO₂ emissions of their journey.

For example, hotel chains are starting to calculate the environmental cost of business meetings, to promote themselves as lower carbon than competitors. Hotels also need to tell customers how to get there with low CO₂ and importantly what to do there without needing a car.

The Guinness Storehouse which is certified to the Sustainable Tourism Environment Programme (STEP), encourages customers to walk up to their attraction with their podcast of the city centre, which is an extension of the tourist attraction itself - during your

walk you learn about the relationship between the development of the city and the history of Guinness. Creating a podcast is now easier than most companies think, you don't need the budget of a large firm, just some creative thinking.

www.guinness-storehouse.com/en/Podcast.aspx



BETWEEN BOOKING AND ARRIVING

Tell your customer how to prepare for their visit - what to bring, what is acceptable behaviour, suitable clothing (if relevant), how to respect other users that will be there.

This is the time to do something to make travel to your location more environmentally friendly - provide information on public transport timetables and destinations, how as a business you will find public transport times for your visitors, having a list of car-free things to do in the property itself or nearby...

Equally if you can source local goods for their stay, this is the time to encourage pre-booking - particularly beneficial for self-catering properties in rural locations, but not done often enough.

ON ARRIVAL

THERE ARE NO SECOND CHANCES TO MAKE A FIRST IMPRESSION

Will your reception area send the message of wasteful lighting and heat pumped out of the front door?

The look or feel of your business, from accommodation providers and attractions, to conference venues and restaurants, sends a message about whether you really care about being green.

If you have large numbers of customers, you may only be able to display your environmental policy, and a page saying "What we have just done to be more green" to show this is an ongoing, day to day policy.

Smaller businesses, like self-catering properties, get to talk to customers one to one, and it's on arrival they get a chance to share their values while showing guests to their accommodation and explaining how different aspects work e.g. utilities, heating, and so on.

You need to think what works for your business.





REAL CASE STUDIES

BE MORE HONEST IF YOU WANT TO BE TRUSTED

Introducing: Patricia Cortijo. Accor implements customer facing communications on sustainability based on the actions taken - not generic statements.

What we do: 3,500 hotels across the chain including the one in Ireland implement the actions of the Accor Hotels Environment Charter, but they only communicate their commitments to their clients when they have reached a minimum number of actions. At this point, they can either use a generic poster displayed in the lobby area, or print one highlighting the specific things to do in that particular hotel.

Accor has also changed traditional communications like towel agreements, to now explain that 50% of the savings will be invested in carefully chosen reforestation programmes - so people realise this isn't just a gimmick for Accor to save money.

Our top tip: Be transparent and factual, customers appreciate it. And don't start communicating until you have reached a certain point in implementing.



Patricia Cortijo



DURING THE STAY/VISIT

Most Irish businesses wait until customers arrive to tell them what they do - this is your chance to communicate by showing what you do. Decide how much you want the communication to affect the customer experience, or whether it is just in the background.

Some five star hotels are reducing all information displayed to ensure the perception of quality is not affected, while other businesses opt to provide short messages throughout (for example, in the shower, notes about reduced water consumption, by the bedroom entrance, a note about what could be done with the electricity from leaving the lights on).

FOR YOUR BEDROOM BROWSER, YOU COULD PRINT TWO LISTS:

- > “these are the things you can see” - our honey tastes better because it’s local, we serve water filtered for free to save on glass transport and waste, our clever lights come on automatically when needed, with your help we raised £500 for our local wildlife club...

- > “and these are the things you can’t” - we have saved enough oil/gas/electricity to do x, we have saved enough water to do x, we reduced our carbon emissions by x...

In the 5 star Merrion Hotel in Dublin most environmental actions are behind the scenes, so we make sure the concierge has information that will be of use to the customer. Our jogging map tends to be the first thing about our environmental efforts that clients see.

For accommodation providers, the bedroom browser is the best place for all the background and more technical information - the type that wouldn’t bring your customers through the door, but helps reinforce the range of things you do. The committed few that read it tell us they appreciate it.



REAL CASE STUDIES

TELL IT IN A MOVIE

Visitors to **Dromoland Castle in Co. Clare**, who have any interest in the green aspects of the hotel, are given a complimentary DVD. The staff made this DVD to showcase their environmental efforts. The making of the DVD encouraged the staff to be proud of their efforts and encouraged them to promote their efforts to the visitors. The DVD communicates the work of Dromoland in an innovative way and is also available on YouTube, and used at sales presentations.



TELL IT WITH TOAST

For breakfast at the six **Bewelys Hotels in Ireland** guests are offered a 'Fully Irish'. All the ingredients that go into this breakfast option are 'fully' sourced from Bord Bia certified Irish suppliers. Rather than just listing the local suppliers Bewleys use this original wording to get their message across.



IF ONE THING DOESN'T WORK, TRY SOMETHING ELSE



Simon and Christina

Introducing: Simon and Christina O'Hara at the luxury Coopershill Country House Hotel in Sligo.

What we do: We introduced recycling bins in our eight bedrooms and we needed an elegant way of doing this. We chose to have our logo and website printed on jute bags costing €1 that actually look quite smart, and to use these bags as our recycling bins.

Now clients want to buy them! We sell 200 of them per year for €5, quite often for customers to carry our homemade jams that we also sell. It's a great way of starting a conversation about the other things the hotel does to be green, that we don't want to push down anybody's throat.

We have tried other campaigns such as planting a tree for €20 in our grounds, which has had a low take up and we hardly



Coppershill jute bag

promote, as most of our environmental communication is through the environmental policy documents in the bedroom browser.

Our top tip: Find an appropriate way to communicate your values to your customers- if they show interest, you can then explain more.



AFTER THE STAY/VISIT

Stay in touch with your customers. Speaking about your green efforts will be more welcomed than a direct promotional message saying “book with us again.”

If your customers saw you plant trees, tell them how they are growing. If you had pictures from a local school, tell customers how you are now speaking with other schools and how these children are learning from what they saw with you.

A large family hotel chain publishes a yearly newsletter that amongst other things provides an update of births, marriages, retirements and deaths amongst their personnel. It's one more way to communicate that their staff are employed for the long run and to encourage customer loyalty that for them, really works.

IF YOU HAD PICTURES FROM A LOCAL SCHOOL, TELL CUSTOMERS HOW YOU ARE NOW SPEAKING TO OTHER SCHOOLS



SAY IT WITH FLOWERS



Malkin Tower Farm

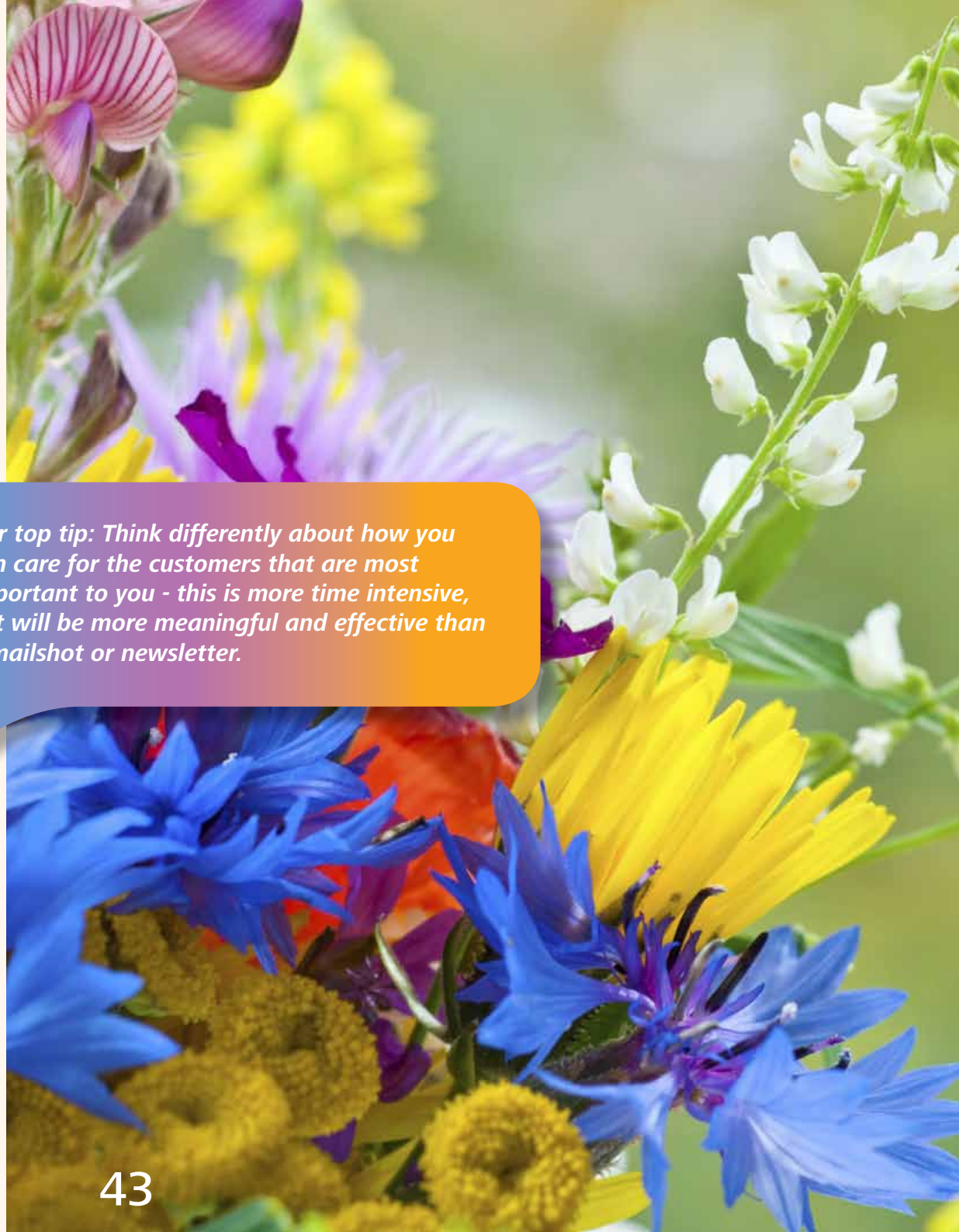


Malkin Tower & Rachel Turner

Introducing: Rachel Turner. Families love pressing flowers with us at the end of the summer season at Malkin Tower Farm Holiday Cottages (Lancashire, England).

What we do: We identify, collect and press flowers with families - much as we did with our own children. We keep them pressed in the cottage and once ready we post them as a memento of their holiday. Usually this contributes to that family reminiscing about their time with us and often leads to a further booking.

Our top tip: Think differently about how you can care for the customers that are most important to you - this is more time intensive, but will be more meaningful and effective than a mailshot or newsletter.



TIME FOR ACTION!

What are you already doing?

What do you want to do?

What do you need to achieve it?

Who do I tell? Choose one type of customer at a time - they are all interested in different things.

Why am I telling?
Choose one main reason.

What do I say? Make sure the customer will appreciate what you tell them - make it interesting, easy to hear, easy to act on.

Where do I tell? Aiming to sell directly, if you can to repeat customers, with stories that engage, backed with facts.

When do I tell? Probably on several occasions, making sure the message is consistent.

Thank You...

To the businesses and organisations that provided information for this document.

Accor Hotels

www.accorhotels.com

Airfield

www.airfield.ie

Ard Nahoo

www.ardnahoo.com

**Ballynahinch Castle Hotel
and Salmon Fishery**

www.ballynahinch-castle.com

Bewleys Hotels

www.bewleyshotels.com

Brooklodge and Wells Spa

www.brooklodge.com

Bush Hotel

www.bushhotel.com

Chleire Haven Yurts

www.yurt-holidays-ireland.com

Coopershill Country House Hotel

www.coopershill.com

Dromoland Castle

www.dromoland.ie

Garryvoe Hotel

www.garryvoehotel.com

Gleninchaquin Park

www.gleninchaquin.com

Glenribbeen Eco Lodge B&B

www.glenribbeen.com

Heart of Burren Walks

www.heartofburrenwalks.com

Ireland Green Travel App

www.ethicaltraveller.net

Jury's Inn

www.jurysinns.com

Leitrim Landscape Walks

[http://sites.google.com/site/
leitrimlandscapesguidedwalks/](http://sites.google.com/site/leitrimlandscapesguidedwalks/)

Loch Allen Adventure Centre

www.loughallenadventure.com

Malkin Tower Farm Holiday Cottages

www.malkintowerfarm.co.uk

Mulranny Park Hotel

www.mulrannyparkhotel.ie

Músaem Chorca Dhuibhne

www.westkerrymuseum.com

Orchard Acre

www.orchardacrefarm.com

Outdoors Ireland

www.outdoorsireland.com

Primrose Valley Hotel

www.primroseonline.co.uk

The Boghill Centre

www.boghill.com

The Guinness Storehouse

www.guinness-storehouse.com

The Merrion Hotel

www.merrionhotel.com

The Moorings Guesthouse

www.moorings.ie

The Radisson Hotel Group

www.radisson.com

Trinity Island Lodge

www.trinityisland.com

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Reference:

Green Marketing Toolkit, Fáilte Ireland 2011.

www.failteireland.ie

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