

Enjoy Colorado - An Information Store?

While at Fort Carson, trying to understand the changes going on in America, reflected in its young people I had studied Toffler's 'Future Shock', McLuhan's 'Medium is the Message' and Naisbit's 'Megatrends'

Toffler was projecting the great - and unsettling - changes going on in America.

Thanks to John Denver's 'Rocky Mountain High' song, just released in 1972, hordes of people started flocking to Colorado. Many to get away from Big Cities, Big Government, and Big Companies. It unleashed the dream of living in the beautiful Rockies, especially the 'natural' places - not just the highly commercialized and packed urban ones.

In addition to the 'normal' tourism for which Colorado was already well known, it was attracting younger people who wanted to visit the 'out of the way' places, even abandoned 'ghost towns.' And somehow make a living there.

McLuhan was describing the separation of the 'content' of information from the 'medium' that carries it - whether as books, papers, maps or photographs or movies.

I already had seen while working in the Secretary of Defense's office the earliest 'Xerox' type copying machines - which could reproduce a section of a map, in one copy, with great fidelity. And presumably cheaply, with an affordable - for small business - machine.

And I knew that big, costly 'main-frame' Computers that

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government and large companies used were getting smaller - and I hoped, cheaper. They excelled at handling and sorting large volumes of 'Information.' Toffler even talked about 'Electronic Cottages.'

So I created "Enjoy Colorado" - a 'Retail' Information Store.



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Wife Patsy and I in front of my first business

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Two of my 'Travel Advisors' filling orders for their custom, paid, 'travel information.'

The Market?

I noted that when people came to Colorado, or planned on a 'vacation' they were limited in their knowledge by guidebooks, or gas station maps, or promotional publications which were paid for by commercial business advertising. But even, by 1973, gas station maps were costing money - they were seldom 'free' any more. And if a group or couple or family wanted to hike to a place where they could take the best photographs of Pikes

Peak - where would they get the detailed 'information' about that place and what it would take to get there?

So I wondered what if I directly 'sold' Colorado "Information" - but tailored to the specific desires and criteria of a client for what he or she wanted to see, visit, find, or do? And provided to him or her that information packaged on the spot by Xerography and a binder made up of only what is needed. Or even provide that information 'orally' by one of our 'Travel Advisors' if not over the counter, then by telephone.

But the key being an effort to determine exactly what the client wants - either a kind of subjective 'experience' as well as a specific place, service, item, or scene. And to provide all that is needed to realize that goal.

Do you want to 'go fishing' or 'catch fish'?

Or although many a person, or family, wanted to go to Colorado for a traditional 'vacation' BUT others wanted to be directed, as one man specified, 'through towns that have no more than 1 lawyer per 1,000 population.' That man looking for a dreamplace to live and set up a practice.

In other words, the Colorado Information was to be gathered to be produced for the traveller 'to order.' And it was important to determine - via our expertise and experience - what the customer subjectively really wanted - which is not always just for what he asks for.

The Gathering of Colorado 'Information'

Now I had decided that the 'Capital' asset for the Company

would be the 'Information' Itself. The 'knowledge' of Colorado, not just the objective 'data' about the state, but the 'aesthetic' appeal of its offerings. Quality of the experience.

The key was that much information would be of 'natural' - outdoor - places, like 'camping places' which had no commercial offerings. No 'commissions paid to us.

But I had to gather a lot, myself. And when we got rolling, hire people who knew - from having been there AND experienced what is there - for sightseers, photographers, hunters (antiques to game), or opportunities.

For starters I purchased one copy of every USGS Map Sheet for every square inch of Colorado, and a map case for all of them which would permit rapid identification, narrowing in, and then extraction of the right sheet - or even small sections of sheets - whose information which could be crisply copied. I had produced by the Gousha company, special overall 'Enjoy Colorado' logoed maps of Colorado that were of the highest readability and quality. And in some cases extracts of oral tapes with a narrative to guide the customer.

All headed toward 'multi-media' packages handed to the 'customer' that addressed exactly what he wanted

Then I personally spent over 5 months travelling over the state 'gathering' information for our Enjoy Colorado data base. And while I 'gathered' objective information in map, drawing, photographic, textual form, I also recorded my 'subjective' reaction to every place. Heading toward having my 'travel advisors' - who may themselves be experienced - even 'expert' - fishermen, rock or mountain climbers, photographers, artists,

4-wheeler explorers - also record their subjective reactions to the places they researched.

Out of that approach evolved our company motto "Access to Experiences"

That all was a very, very ambitious, but long term, goal. Which would take a lot more operating capital than I had available to my enterprise in 1974.

Ahead of My Time

As I seem recurrently to foresee, I even described the possible future services of Enjoy Colorado to a reporter sometime in 1975 when I said "There will be an ability for us to rent a device which will permit a traveller, first to point it toward the horizon's mountain range, ask where he is - and get an answer by radio telephone or satellite - and then in response to his request to find an off-the-track restaurant, transmit a map segment with directions right to his desired destination."

Of course by 2007 those were called personal GPS devices, with graphical smart phones, linked to the Internet and Mapquest. None of which existed - yet.

My vision, was, as often, ahead of its time.

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