

Tourism Industry Skills Needs

Report

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Executive Summary

Nationally, tertiary travel and tourism qualifications, up to and including level six are undergoing a review. The New Zealand Qualification Authority (2009) has established that there are too many travel and tourism qualifications and they believe there is a need to reduce the number. As such, they are calling for tertiary institutions to review the qualifications they currently provide.

As part of this Targeted Review of Qualifications (TRoQ) Wintec will be redeveloping all of their travel and tourism programmes. The current research aims to ensure that the changes made to the qualifications are relevant to local industry and that graduates have the necessary skills to ensure the industry's viability and sustainability.

Method

To do this, I designed a questionnaire which could be hand out in person for completion or completed remotely via an online survey. The questionnaire asked respondents to identify their particular staffing needs (both current and future) in relation to two key areas: skills and attributes. It also asked respondents to prioritise various skills and attributes. Skills in this instance are defined as hard knowledge (for example marketing knowledge) and attributes being personal characteristics/people skills (for example communication). It did become apparent that some consider Communication to be both a soft and hard skill.

I obtained relevant industry contacts from Hamilton and Waikato Tourism as well as through my own investigation and experience. Appointments were made in six cases for personal visits which were undertaken in Taupo and Queenstown, with the majority of the questionnaires being carried out online using Survey Monkey with 75 industry personnel throughout New Zealand

Findings

The results of the survey established that of those surveyed the majority identified that the most important skills needed were Customer Service, Communication and Computer skills ranking highest and Marketing, Advertising, Economics and Law were identified as not as important. The most important attributes needed for industry were Customer Service, Communication and People Skills. The lower ranking attributes included Sales Skills, Writing Skills and Formal Qualifications. As mentioned above it became apparent from the findings that respondents discussed Customer Service and Communication as both a skill and an attribute. This has shown that there is a need for research to establish exactly what industry regard as specific skills and attributes by defining these areas fully. This will ensure that these specific areas of knowledge are included in future delivery.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, it is recommended that further research be undertaken in order to investigate respondents' understandings of the three most commonly identified skills and/or attributes. These skills/attributes are:

1. Communication Skills
2. Customer Service Skills
3. People Skills

This will clarify what the industry requirements are, in order to further ensure that the tourism qualifications that Wintec provides are current and relevant. This will result in better trained and more highly skilled graduates, and be of significant benefit to local tourism providers.

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Stakeholders

- Hamilton and Waikato Tourism
- Industry including Information Centres, Accommodation providers, Retail travel Agents, Wholesale Tour Operators, Tourism Operators, Education Providers
- Centre for Tourism, Waikato Institute of Technology
- Research Office, Waikato Institute of Technology

Objectives

To consult with the tourism industry within New Zealand by way of primary and secondary methods to enable the Centre for Tourism to design the curriculum content and assessment criteria of the Diploma in International Tourism. This will mean Wintec courses are more closely aligned to the needs of industry.

Methodology and Data Analysis

This was initially carried out by gathering data from industry both online and face to face as required and as practical. Industry included Information Centres, Accommodation providers, Retail travel Agents, Wholesale Tour Operators, Tourism Operators, and Education Providers. Data was analysed and a report generated with stakeholders notified of the results in presentation and hard copy.

Limitations

Seventy six tourism industry operators were sent the survey initially. Although this is not all the travel and tourism operators it does, in my opinion, give a good cross section as well as a good representation of operators in the Waikato. Of those that were sent the questionnaire approximately 60% responded.

Initial Findings

Information centres, accommodation providers, tour operators and other tourism agencies rated various attributes on a on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = least important, 10 = most important).

- People Skills Communication and Customer Service highest
- Formal qualifications, writing skills lowest
- Personal presentation not rated as high as people skills, communication and customer service
- People skills, customer service and communications were rated higher than sales

| | Organisation | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Attribute | Info centre (12) | Accomm (8) | Tour operator (10) | Travel Agent (3) | Wholesaler (1) | Education provider (1) |
| People skills | 7.00 | 6.50 | 6.80 | 7.00 | 7.00 | 7.00 |
| Communications | 7.00 | 6.50 | 6.60 | 7.00 | 7.00 | 7.00 |
| Personal Presentation | 6.26 | 6.63 | 5.60 | 6.67 | 7.00 | 7.00 |
| Customer Service | 7.00 | 6.50 | 6.90 | 7.00 | 7.00 | 7.00 |
| Conversation | 6.67 | 6.13 | 6.00 | 6.33 | 7.00 | 7.00 |
| Sales skills | 6.25 | 4.88 | 5.10 | 6.33 | 7.00 | 4.00 |
| Writing | 5.42 | 4.50 | 4.10 | 6.33 | 7.00 | 7.00 |
| Formal qual | 4.33 | 4.14 | 3.30 | 5.50 | 7.00 | 4.00 |

Table 1. A rating of required staff attributes by various tourism operators

These providers also rated skills that they would be looking for in a new staff member from 1 to 10 (1 = least important, 10 = most important).

| | Organisation | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Skill | Info centre (12) | Accomm (7) | Tour operator (10) | Travel Agent (3) | Wholesaler (1) | Education provider (1) |
| Customer Service | 9.75 | 8.14 | 9.10 | 10.00 | 10.00 | 10.00 |
| Communication | 9.75 | 8.14 | 9.30 | 9.33 | 10.00 | 10.00 |
| Computer skills | 7.64 | 5.86 | 6.60 | 6.33 | 10.00 | 7.00 |
| Website Maint. | 5.83 | 3.43 | 4.30 | 4.50 | 6.00 | 5.00 |
| Social Media | 5.33 | 4.29 | 4.40 | 5.00 | 8.00 | 5.00 |
| Tvlrs needs | 8.17 | 5.57 | 4.80 | 8.00 | 10.00 | 8.00 |
| Finance | 5.33 | 4.71 | 4.20 | 7.33 | 6.00 | 5.00 |
| HR | 7.00 | 4.71 | 6.10 | 7.00 | 8.00 | 6.00 |
| Geography | 5.83 | 4.33 | 4.50 | 8.00 | 10.00 | 8.00 |
| Marketing | 5.25 | 3.86 | 4.20 | 5.33 | 8.00 | 5.00 |
| Advertising | 4.42 | 2.86 | 2.60 | 4.50 | 8.00 | 3.00 |
| Economics | 3.50 | 2.71 | 2.30 | 4.50 | 6.00 | 3.00 |
| Law | 4.55 | 2.86 | 2.20 | 4.50 | 6.00 | 5.00 |

Table 2 Skills rating

Points to consider

- Smaller regional companies have a need for soft skills/attributes (customer service, communication etc.) rather than formal skills
- Larger organisations have more need to formal skills as well as soft skills, including computer skills, social media knowledge, travellers needs
- The number of respondents in each category (only 3 travel agencies, 1 wholesaler: Info centres, travel agents, operators – mostly soft skills
Large operations include hard/formal skills

Staff requirements with required qualifications. This table shows results respondents gave when asked what qualifications new staff should hold

| | Organisa tion | | | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Qualification | Info centre (12) | Acco mm (7) | Tour operator (10) | Travel Agent (3) | Wholesa ler (1) | Education provider (1) |
| Junior no qual | 11.10 | 16.70 | 27.30 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Junior min qual | 22.20 | 66.70 | 45.50 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Junior full qual | 33.30 | 0.00 | 18.20 | 100.00 | 100.00 | 100.00 |
| Int. Some qual/experience | 44.40 | 83.30 | 45.50 | 100.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Sen. Full experience | 44.40 | 50.00 | 9.10 | 100.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |

Challenges:

While the response rate of those surveyed was high, this research did not include all tourism providers. It did still, however, give a good representation of various sectors within the industry. It was also difficult to distinguish between the needs of larger tourism operators and the smaller operators. It seemed apparent that a larger operator may have more need for specific skills such as social media whereas a smaller operator needed more of the customer focused skills. This raises further questions for further research regarding whether smaller operators employ external contractors such as accounting or marketing agencies.

Conclusion

This research was carried out with tourism operators from throughout New Zealand and as such included a variety of activities and size of operators. It does however identify that in general terms soft skills are very important and in many cases rate as more important than hard skills. Considerations for the redevelopment of travel and tourism qualifications should, on the findings of this research, emphasise:

- More soft skills as a part of the teaching rather than hard skills
- Is it our role to teach soft skills or do we leave that to another school, programme or provider?
- Do we have soft skills modules at the start of the programme?
- Should students be tested on their soft skills at enrolment as part of the entry criteria?
- Can we grade students on their soft skills?

Recommendations

This report has identified key questions that will be of great benefit to future developments of the Diploma of Tourism at Wintec. However, it is important to further clarify and attempt to find answers to the questions it raises. In order to do so, further research is needed to identify further specifics regarding required attributes and skills – as identified by industry.



The following questions will be raised in the ensuing research

- Clarify exactly what is meant by the soft skills identified by industry.
- What is specifically meant by Communication Skills?
- How do you define People skills?
- What standards of Customer Service? Do we quantify?
- To what level of Personal Presentation?

References

New Zealand Qualification Authority (September, 2009). Targeted Review of the Qualifications System Focussing on certificate and diploma levels. Retrieved from <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/assets/About-us/Consultations-and-reviews/TROQ/troq-consultation.pdf>

Appendices

1. Survey questions – 
Survey questions.docx
2. Summary of findings – 
Summary of findings Aug 2013.xlsx

Appendix 1



This short survey is designed to give the Centre for Tourism at Waikato Institute of Technology a better idea of the skill needs of industry. We ask you to please take a few minutes of your time to complete the questions below. You will, on collation of the survey results, be given the findings. Your responses will be kept completely confidential and on completing the survey you agree to the answers being used for future tourism programme development at Waikato Institute of Technology.

If you have any queries regarding this survey please make initial contact with:

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Category

For our information please advise your area of business:

Accommodation provider

Retail Travel agent

Wholesale tour operator

Tourism operator

Information centre

Education provider

Other (please specify) _____

Please advise the number of staff you currently employ

Are you a multi-site operator?

Yes/ No

Employment requirements

1. Do you envisage you will need additional or replacement staff in these periods

Less than 12 months Y/N 12-24 months Y/N more than 24 months Y/N

2. If yes to any of the above please show what category of staff member will be required

Junior – no qualification

Junior – minimum qualification

Junior – full qualification

Intermediate – some experience and/or qualification

Senior - full experience

Other (specify) _____

3. With regards your staffing requirements approximately how many staff will you be looking for in the

- a. Short term
- b. Medium term
- c. Long term

Skill levels

1. Please advise the importance to you and your organisation of the following attributes on a rating of 1 to 7 with 1 being not important and 7 being very important. You may rate all at the same level if you wish. You do not have to prioritise.

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------|---|---|-----------|---|---|----------------|-----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | N/A |
| Not Important | | | Important | | | Very important | |

- a. People skills
- b. Communication skills
- c. Personal presentation
- d. Customer service skills
- e. Conversation skills
- f. Sales skills
- g. Writing skills
- h. Formal qualifications

2. Please rate on a score of 1 to 10, with 1 being least important and 10 being most important, the following skill levels you would be looking for in a new staff member

- a. Customer service skills (sales, helpfulness)
- b. Communication skills (conversation, telephone, etiquette)
- c. Computer skills (Word, Excel)
- d. Website maintenance and development
- e. Social media maintenance
- f. Knowledge of travellers motivation and needs
- g. Finance (basic accounting and admin knowledge)
- h. Human resource (team work, health & safety, motivation)
- i. World geography
- j. Marketing
- k. Advertising design/writing
- l. Economics
- m. Law (basic introduction to law)

Do you currently have a need for:

Part time employees Y/N

Student work placements Y/N

If yes who.....

If no why not.....

Other comments:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We at Wintec will be using this to determine the content of our travel and tourism programmes to better aid industry by providing more suitable graduates and your input is appreciated.

Company/organisation name_____

Contact email for feedback of results:

Appendix 2

1. Attributes:

HIGH People skills, Communications, Personal Presentation, Conversation skills
MED Sales skills
LOW Writing, Formal qualifications

2. Skills

HIGH Sales, Customer Service, telephone skills, Communication
MED Social media, Traveller's needs, Website, Geography
LOW Law, Economics, Advertising, Marketing

3. So do we now

- Emphasise more soft skills into the teaching rather than hard skills?
- Is it our role to teach the soft skills or do we leave that to another school, programme or provider?
- Do we have soft skills the soft skills or do we leave that
- Should students be tested on their soft skills at enrolment to another school, programme or provid
- Can we grade students on their soft skill ability/attributes?
- What is the balance?

4. So now the questions

- What actually is meant by Communication Skills?
- How do you define People skills?
- What standards of Customer Service? Do we quantify?

To what level of Personal Presentation

5. Employability

Are the skills that industry want teachable?

Does our enrolment process include screening of soft skills? psome can can enrolme

Do we, as well as personal presentation, go that step further psome can can enrolmeramme

Do we, as well as communication skills, teach them how to speak face to face, how to network?