

What's a destination manager to do?



## A Strategic Approach to Hard Times

This economy is tough. Tourism budgets are down—often way down. The pressure is on to cut, and then to cut more. How should tourism managers deal with the situation?

When times are this difficult, you don't need gimmicks. This is a time for solid strategic approaches. Time to take advantage of the best tools out there for designing strategy—and to use all your assets to their maximum potential. A powerful way to do that is to use systems thinking.

Systems thinking is a body of knowledge and practice that draws on the latest breakthroughs in science. It is revolutionizing medicine, education, and ecology—and has been adopted by military strategic planners and business management thinkers, because it works. It deals with everything differently than we are used to—looking at whole systems, and the relations between things, rather than isolating parts. It recognizes that changing a system—such as the marketplace in which your destination competes—is tricky and is likely to be counter-intuitive. And it looks for points of leverage—places where you can exercise more influence, more efficiently.

- *What law of physics should shape your marketing strategy?*
- *How can you cut your advertising budget, narrow your marketing circle, and reach more real visitors—all at once?*
- *What assets do you have in hard times (which may be scarce in good times) that you can leverage for success?*
- *What do media need from you, that you can give them—and you get the benefit?*

Good strategy addresses the things you can control. Using systems thinking, you can leverage a crisis into an opportunity.

### PLACES CONSULTING

For more information contact: Valeri LeBlanc  
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Systems thinking goes beyond simple notions of cause and effect and looks at the way things interact. A conventional approach to seeking media coverage might be to issue a press release or request coverage. A systems approach would be very different—and much more likely to succeed. This tool is well known to the best business managers around the world—but has not made its way into destination management

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Eight specific things  
a tourism manager can do to  
generate efficiency when it is most needed,  
and why they will work.

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PLACES principal Gary Esolen was the founding head of the non-profit New Orleans Tourism Marketing Corporation, which was created in response to a severe economic downturn in the early 1980's. During Esolen's tenure the destination experienced compounded ten percent growth for a decade, and the number of hotel rooms increased by fifty percent. Economists spoke of the "tourism-led economic recovery." PLACES clients have included: New Orleans, Mexico, Aruba, The Czech Republic, Philadelphia, PA State Tourism, The Finger Lakes, Lake Placid, Broward County, Sonesta,, Thompkins County, Warren County, Ithaca, NY.

We offer a one-hour thought provoking talk where we introduce the concepts of systems thinking and show what it can mean to you. Then we get down to details—practical ways you can make the most efficient use of resources now, and how you can prepare the ground for a solid recovery.

In addition we offer a two hour workshop in which we will walk you and your industry through the particulars of your market and help you develop an action plan. A downloadable workbook will be provided.

Surprisingly affordable, please call for prices.

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"We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them."

Albert Einstein

"There is a difference between doing things right, and doing the right thing."

Peter Drucker

"Today's problems come from yesterday's  
"solutions."

Peter Senge

# What You Can Expect When You Work With Us

“Esolen is an incredible speaker. I saw him give a seminar on marketing late on the last day of a three day state tourism conference here in Louisiana. Everybody was tired and ready to go home. He filled the room with electric energy, and connected so deeply that people—including me—were emotionally moved by his insights. I’ve never seen anything like it.”

*Mike Liffman, Louisiana State University and the Louisiana Tourism Promotion Association*

“I have sat in hundreds of talks and seminars on Cultural Tourism. PLACES has more to offer, with regard to both the big picture and the details, than anyone else I know.”

*Lenwood Sloan, Director of Cultural and Heritage Tourism, Pennsylvania*

“Unfailingly good advice and even wisdom in the midst of all the chatter.”

*J. Mickey Rowley, Deputy Secretary for Tourism, Pennsylvania*

“When I was leading an economic development program in the Czech Republic, and tourism became a major issue, I brought in PLACES. They helped us create the first modern public-private partnerships in tourism marketing in that country. They are knowledgeable, articulate, and practical.”

*Norton Berman, The Berman Group, Prague*

“Here in Philadelphia, we modeled our tourism marketing program after what Gary Esolen did in New Orleans, and he has been an important consultant to us. The depth of his knowledge and skill is unparalleled.”

*Meryl Levitz, President, Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation*

“Gary Esolen is a marketing wizard. I have worked with destinations across the United States, and there is no one like him. Watching him draw the marketing message out of the numbers, and then put his insights into practice, is like watching a magician at work.”

*Bill Siegel, President, Longwoods International*

“Other managers in my chain have asked me how we get such great results in New Orleans. I tell them our secret, PLACES.”

*Hans Wandfluh, Board of Directors, Royal Sonesta Hotels*

“Without their advice, and more important, inspiration... *Light in Winter* would not exist.”

*Barbara Mink, Artistic Director, Light in Winter (a festival at the convergence of art, music and science)*

“Our family restaurant was in trouble. We had lost touch with our Creole roots. Esolen and his partner, LeBlanc, showed us how to turn it around, and quickly. Years later, we are still getting benefits from the advice they gave us.”

*Armand Olivier, Olivier’s Creole Restaurant*

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“The only thing harder than starting something new is stopping something old.” Donella Meadows

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