TOURISM
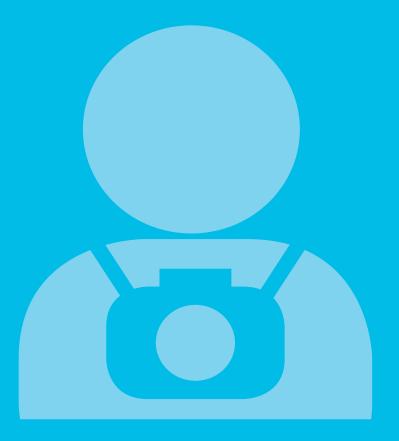## CASE STUDIES

A deeper look at how small businesses use digital technology to have a positive impact on the way they run their business.

BLACK CAT CRUISES

Black Cat Cruises based in Lyttelton, began operation in 1985, originally carrying a few hundred people per year in small canoes and dinghies. Starting out with Akaroa Harbour cruises, they also offer swimming with dolphins, ferry services and private charters. Black Cat Cruises has now grown to be one of the largest cruise companies in the South Island, employing 30 permanent staff, with 50 throughout the summer months.

The team have recently focussed on implementing digital solutions relating to health and safety. Black Cat's ferry service in Lyttelton operates from 6am to 10pm and requires logging of important health and safety information at the start and finish of each trip. A purpose built app is now in use, where staff can easily indicate departure, safe arrival and related information. For example, if a safe arrival has not been logged within the expected time for the journey, an automatic safety alert is triggered. Use of the app has allowed significant savings in overhead costs, with the old manual processes for logging this information no longer needed.

There are seven vessels in operation across Lyttelton and Akaroa Harbours, and each one carries a tablet which gives staff access to the online health and safety system. Here, staff can log vessel checks, incidents or issues. Logging issues online means they can be dealt with quickly. In the past, checks, incidents and issues reporting were all done via phone call or email, with the possibility of delays in resolving and loss of information.

Social media channels are now important, and they are really helping to attract new potential customers. To make the best use of social media, the company uses digital marketing experts. Clever use of photos and comments from users, combined with content produced by staff, ensures there is always up-to-date imagery on the company's website, which then links through to social media marketing.

Black Cat Cruises are about to launch their latest tech innovation, a chatbot on their website. A chatbot, short for chatterbot, is an Artificial Intelligence feature that can be embedded in website customer contact applications. The chatbot will learn with each customer query. It is aimed at boosting customers' satisfaction and leading them more smoothly to be able to book the activities they're interested in (known as the relevant sales conversion funnel).

Paul Milligan, Black Cat CEO, says the team is always looking for new tech to speed up processes and make things easier. He's really happy that the Black Cat team has left paper behind and moved to an online, purpose built health and safety system, accessible from anywhere, and making Black Cat Cruises safer for everyone.

CASE STUDY

HAKA TOURS

Haka Tours, part of the Sanders Whānau's Haka Tourism Group, began operation in 2007. Haka Tours have re-imagined the traditional group touring model. They provide unique tours to smaller tour groups (maximum of 16 people), allowing their customers to pick and choose activities before the tour begins.

Being a small-to-mid sized business in the midst of scaling up their operation, making efficiencies without employing extra staff is high on the company's agenda. By utilising technology and innovative solutions, they have managed to not only improve the customer experience, but also staff productivity.

Utilising a bespoke backend web engine, the Haka Tours team focuses on providing a better online customer experience. Their recent website upgrade is empowering their customers with the ability to fully customise tours, with a range of add-on experiences and upgrades when booking.

This innovative company uses another digital tool to target the application of online promotion codes (which give discounts, for example). While other online promoters typically undertake a "one size fits all" approach to applying these codes, the Haka Tours team takes a personalised approach. The typical "add a promo code" box has been removed from the Shopping Cart area, with promo discounts automatically applied depending on the link the customer has clicked on. In this way, promotions can be targeted very specifically to their customer's needs.

Continuing with website ingenuity, customers are channeled to products that may suit them based on their browsing history. Haka Tours are also experimenting with online ads to generate traffic and new leads. The team have discovered that inspirational-focused ads have a higher success rate of attracting customers to enter their website and conversion funnel.

The team continually look for new ways to innovate and improve their productivity through the use of digital technologies. Currently, manual responses are sent to customers following website interactions. However, with the upcoming planned automation of transactional emails, automated responses will now be generated specifically tailored to the customer's website interaction. This will free up a large amount of time for their tour advisors and provide an even more personalised service to their customers.

Haka Tours recognise the importance of remaining agile and responsive, changing their technology solutions as needed, dropping what doesn't work and developing areas of measured success.

CASE STUDY

MOGEO'S CAMPERMATE

Mogeo began in 2011 as a small Christchurch tech start-up, following the city's major earthquakes. The team set out to develop a smartphone app called Campermate, with the aim of taking the stress out of travelling by showing campers via their mobile devices nearby locations of everything they'd need when touring in a campervan, from petrol stations to dump stations.

In the early days, founder Adam Hutchinson started by contacting councils around New Zealand requesting location data for public toilets, dump stations and campsites. Campermate launched with 6,000 crowdsourced GPS coordinate locations, which allowed travellers to log their own locations. Location coordinates grew to 13,000 within the first two years. Since then, the location data has increased exponentially, with the app becoming more indispensable with the data from each subsequent user.

Further innovations include the collecting of anonymous GPS data to analyse, such as looking at where campers are searching for public toilets or dump stations. This data has helped inform councils about where there may be gaps in infrastructure, with the data highlighting clear patterns.

The team has also created a platform to send out "distressed inventory" or last minute deals from holiday parks, allowing travellers within 100km of a powered site to receive notifications of deals. Feedback from one of New Zealand's largest holiday park providers indicates that these deals account for an impressive 34% of all of their customers.

Campermate can also be used in an emergency to push out alert notifications to campers, who may otherwise be out of touch with the latest news. Changes to freedom camping policy can be updated and accessible in real time. This functionality has proven important for areas where overcrowding might mean the need for the hasty closure of an existing freedom camping spot.

In the peak of summer, 55,000 campers per day are connected to Campermate. The team continues to innovate and evolve the application. Following a successful Wellington pilot, this summer (2018/2019) the team will be launching sensor cameras with object recognition software at a further ten sites, detecting how many campers are currently located at a campsite and providing travellers with notifications of real time availability of a campsite.

 Adam says that technology has a huge part to play in solving some of the issues around freedom camping. The tech innovations provide benefits for travellers wanting a good experience, local government trying to manage freedom camping, holiday accommodation providers and the commercial sector.

CASE STUDY

SKYDIVING KIWIS

Brothers Lee and Greg Barraclough began Skydiving Kiwis in 2011. With a team of highly skilled and qualified instructors and pilots, Skydiving Kiwis offers tandem, learn-to-skydive and sport skydiving options in the Canterbury region.

Recently, the team co-developed bespoke software which allows them to manage scheduling, organise jump loads, track equipment and manage accounts. Importantly, the purpose built software – called 321Jump - enables the team to stay on top of safety, including logging and tracking gear expiry dates. In the past this was all done manually, which took time for staff to complete checks and left room for human error.

The team have now incorporated the software into the day-to-day operations of the business, which has transformed how they work. In addition to improvements in efficiency and safety, they have access to analytical data such as equipment expiry dates, customer information and data relating to their jumps.

It was important to the team that the digital platform they use reflect their strong company culture. 321Jump software has been developed by skydivers, for skydivers. The team have taken an agile approach to building the software, making changes as needed and keeping options available so the software adapts as the business evolves and grows.

Skydiving Kiwis uses social media channels to stay in touch with their customers long after their first experience. The team regularly publishes visual and social content including photos and videos of customers enjoying their jump experience. The team wants to welcome their customers into the Skydiving Kiwi "family" and using social media, they have successfully produced referrals, repeat customers and a few new friendships.

With 90% of skydiving companies only offering tandem jumps, the additional options on offer at Skydiving Kiwis are a key point of difference. The Skydiving Kiwis website and social media channels have videos which highlight the unique skydiving opportunities available, which helps put Skydiving Kiwis on the map as the place to go for a wide variety of jumps.

Another key focus for the team is developing their Chinese customer base. After attending a ChristchurchNZ[1] programme aimed to help tourism businesses become more responsive to the Chinese market, the team followed a recommendation to use specialist digital marketing in China. Skydiving Kiwis now has a presence on the major Chinese social media channels like WeChat, with a growing base of followers. Skydiving Kiwis has set up popular payment options including Ali Pay and phone QR codes, and Chinese customers can easily purchase add-ons, like videos of their skydiving experience and t-shirts. The website has been enhanced to include full Chinese translation.

In order to increase their environmental sustainability efforts, the team is now developing an online registration platform, moving away from the current paper-based system.

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[1] ChristchurchNZ is a Regional Tourism Organisation, working to optimise the economic and social opportunities that tourism, major events, city promotion and economic development can bring to Christchurch and Canterbury.

STAY NATIVE

Stay Native is a family owned and operated start-up, which assists travellers to New Zealand to connect with authentic cultural and truly local experiences throughout the regions.

Using a custom designed web platform, hosts around the country can register with Stay Native, which gives them the ability to connect with travellers from around the world and promote their unique local experiences. Hosts range from local divers, hunters and fishers, to performers, musicians, farmers, healers and storytellers. Some hosts speak and teach the Māori language, others are artists, weavers and carvers.

The team at Stay Native see the online host system as an opportunity for local people to connect with travellers who are looking for a more authentic New Zealand experience. Many of the hosts live in regions where jobs are scarce. The Stay Native platform is an easy-to-use service allowing whānau to become tourism operators and share their valuable skills, knowledge and culture in an accessible way.

Tourists are able to search for experiences outside of the busier tourist hotspots, distributing the benefits of tourism out into the regions. Once registered, Stay Native takes over online marketing for their hosts.

Stay Native has attracted 35 hosts within their first year of operation, largely through social media promotion. The team continues to look for ways to provide value and enhance the skills of their hosts and are soon to launch a purpose-built e-learning tool.

While hosts have cultural skills they love to share, they often lack IT and other skills relating to starting a new business. The e-learning tool contains articles, videos and interactive services, accessed via the host login to the Stay Native website. The e-learning modules were set up to increase host knowledge on a variety of start-up related topics.

The e-learning modules include options to improve skills in financial literacy, health and safety, social media, capacity building and increasing the quality of the experiences they offer. When hosts complete e-learning modules, the commission they pay to Stay Native is reduced. This acts as an incentive to complete the training, with Stay Native aiming to increase the skills of the hosts and improve the quality of experiences on offer.

The Stay Native team views the e-learning modules as a key enabler of small Māori tourism businesses to reach their potential in their own right, without expensive start-up costs. The team recognises and fully appreciates that some of these businesses may leave the Stay Native platform once they become well established, and Stay Native takes pride in being a part of the building up process.

The team sees their bespoke website as a key tool for connecting their regional hosts to a global audience. The registration service has been set up with a step by step workflow, which leads hosts through the process to establish their experience, including marketing and managing online payments, before their experience can be loaded and made available on the Stay Native website.

CASE STUDY

VELOCITY KARTS

Velocity Karts is in the self-proclaimed business of outrageous fun. With two purpose-built race tracks, visitors can choose from wind powered blokarts or electric drift karts. Customers are taught to sail the blokarts with an instructional video, navigating a circular concrete course with riders controlling the ride while drifting around corners.

Being a local owner-operated business, Velocity Karts needed to look for ways to attract both international and domestic customers without expensive marketing campaigns. Since its beginning four years ago, the company has significantly increased its customer base via a targeted focus on digital media initiatives. These combined digital initiatives have resulted in a 40% profit increase in business for 2018.

The Velocity team have posted over 60,000 photographs of happy customer "action shots" via their various social media channels. This initiative has proven to be an effective way to promote their business both locally and internationally. Recently, videos have also been included, which have been increasingly popular according to view analytics (e.g. Google Analytics and Facebook view metrics).

By setting up an online customer database, Velocity Karts have been able to target customers with promotional campaigns during typically low-turnover periods. This has resulted in immediate success during the generally quieter periods, with customers responding to the promotions with bookings.

Online apps providing customers with the ability to review tourism businesses (such as TripAdvisor) have been key for Velocity Karts in generating international customers. The company provides a high emphasis on customer service, and the many positive reviews received are attracting customers from all over the world, including online orders for vouchers.

In collaboration with other local owner-operators in the industry of fun, Velocity Karts are putting together an "online passport", whereby customers can share photos of themselves enjoying the kart experience via social media channels and receive a discount for additional experiences with other operators in the area.

Velocity Karts have recognised that digital is a key marketing stream for them, with realised tangible benefits.

CASE STUDY