

word-for-word TRANSCRIPT for Group Sales Boot Camp members



How To Pick The Winners Every Time: Stuart's Group Viability Test

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All groups are not created equal. Over half will fail miserably. How would you like to know what clues to look for before you get in too deep? If you want to be a success in the group business, you need to know before you go. I can help.

A good group will bring a variety of big benefits to your business. But what happens when you pick a bad one? You could lose your shirt – and that's just for starters! A bad group is a distraction that could cost you existing clients, put a freeze on new sales, hurt supplier relations and probably keep you awake at night! Become a smart group detective today and you will sleep soundly tonight.

I have a formula for keeping your group business stress-free (as opposed to stress-full). I call it my 10 Point Group Viability Test. I will show you when to say yes, when to walk away and when to run!

A new group opportunity often presents itself as perfect. We get caught up in the excitement and see the payday. We think, "What could possibly go wrong?" Members of the group say they will definitely go – so what's the worry? Then, after a few weeks after launch you realize they are not booking. The group is not selling. People who raised their hands up high before won't return your calls. Suddenly the enthusiasm has dried up. You realize you are in big trouble.

But why – what went wrong? Can it be fixed, can it be saved or should you cut and run? My 10 Point Group Viability Test will tell you what will go wrong before it does. You will know if it is best to be kicking or sticking.

Apply this time-tested formula whenever a tempting group opportunity pops into your head or comes knocking at your door.

1. ARE YOU TALKING TO THE TOP?

- If you are not talking to the decision maker, you may be wasting your breath.
- During the initial selling process, you'll never qualify accurately unless you're speaking to the ONE, the ONE who has power to say yay or nay.
- Presenting your pitch to somebody other than at the top will stack the odds against you.
- Do you really think that somebody will present with your passion and thoroughness? Not a chance. And if you do win the group business, planning the perfect group through a third party dilutes accuracy and wastes time.

SUCCESS FORMULA: To avoid insulting the person who stands in-between you and the decision-maker, request a bigger conference-style meeting. Promote this meeting as an 'idea presentation' though it is truly really a critical question and answer session! This is the most efficient and effective strategy to avoid losing a sale and avert disaster down the road.

2. WHAT IS THE HISTORY?

- Do a complete history work-up. Play detective. Uncover clues. Make believe you are writing a report that will be handed in to the group leader and graded.
- Leave no stone unturned or you may set yourself up for an unpleasant surprise yet to be revealed.
- Ask lots of questions to get full 'disclosure' so the history puzzle is complete.
- Ask for literature or web sites that feature any prior group travel activity.
- Ascertain the level of success or failure and find out why. You do not want to inherit a nightmare-in-waiting!

SUCCESS FORMULA: If they have indeed traveled together before, find out what worked, what did not, and specifically why. Be certain to ask why they are seeking a new agent. Shouldn't you know if they had been fired by the prior travel agency?

If they have not ever traveled together as a group, ask why not. Did something (or some person) prevent an attempt to do a group trip? Uncover any prior obstacles now or they will surely still be in your way tomorrow.

3. IS THE AFFINITY STRONG ENOUGH?

- The affinity is the magnet that draws people in.
- Weak magnet, nobody cares. They'll read your promotional message once and never come back. No sales.
- The affinity is the glue that binds a people together.
- Weak glue means it can't stick together. People back out.
- So whatever the reason is for the group traveling together, it must be strong and binding.

SUCCESS FORMULA: Strong affinities convince people to travel on this date, to this destination, using this product, paying this price and with these people. Are you convinced?

4. HOW MANY POTENTIAL GUESTS?

- What's the size of the prospect pool?
- How many members in the organization?
- How many people share the passion and would be attracted to this group trip?
- The bigger the better so you can play the odds.
- It is unrealistic to expect 100% will buy even if it's a family reunion or destination wedding.
- Only a percentage will actually buy, no matter what they tell you in the beginning.

SUCCESS FORMULA: Beware of group leaders who tell you everybody will go – that's possible but extremely rare. Look at their travel history and send out a survey to ascertain level of interest. Send out a survey to gauge level of interest.

5. IS THE BUDGET SENSIBLE?

- If the group wants a 7 day Alaska cruise for \$999, including verandah, shipboard credit, and an open bar cocktail party in July – that's when you say no to greedy or unrealistic requests.
- Is it possible to deliver a quality experience by your standards? If not, say PASS.
- Know if the product and the experience they seek can be bought for that price.

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SUCCESS FORMULA: Ask for budget parameters or ranges. Some in the group will pay more, some less. Ask if they are open to considering good, better, best option which may be above budget. Be sure of wiggle room to supersize. That is good for everybody. People are almost always willing to pay a little more to get a lot more – especially if it saves them money or stress if they way.

6. CAN YOU HANDLE THE DEMANDS?

- What is expected of you?
- Do you have the time?
- Expertise?
- Energy?
- Do you have staff who can help?

SUCCESS FORMULA: Go with your gut – if you think it's overwhelming, it is. Break it down and write it down before you say yes or no. If you have staff, do they have time and do they need to be compensated? Don't jump in over your head.

7. CAN THE PRODUCT HANDLE THE DEMANDS?

- If the group has special needs or require many activities, are these needs too complex?
- Can the ship or hotel accommodate special requests or might they expose risks and problems?
- Most certainly the group will come back unhappy if things don't go smoothly.
- You must trust and depend on the product

SUCCESS FORMULA: Go with your gut – if you think it's overwhelming, it is. Break it down and write it down before you say yes or no. Talk to the suppliers. Present the needs and listen carefully to the itemized response. They won't want to jump in over their heads either.

8. CAN THE TARGET BE EASILY REACHED?

- By reach I mean advertising and communications.
- The harder it is to reach everybody in a targeted fashion, the more you'll need to spend.
- If the group can gather locally, that's great.
- If they're all spread out, is there a mailing list? Is there a go-to web site, Facebook or twitter distribution option?
- It is essential to keep marketing costs low
- If you have to run paid advertising, be sure it is low cost and totally targeted.
- In order to sell the product, you need an effective, efficient way to reach the prospects.

SUCCESS FORMULA: The stronger the affinity, the stronger your ability to reach the members. The more likely there is a perfect gathering place for members. Strong affinities have easy ways of connecting group members. How active is the group's web site, blog or Facebook and will the help promote? See if the group is willing to provide advertising and editorials at no charge. Let's hope they are vested in the success of the group too.

9. WHAT IS THE ANNUITY POTENTIAL?

- What are the chances these people will travel together as a group again?
- Is this a one off, one time trip, are you earning fairly?
- Focus on this one
- Be certain even one group departure is good for your business.
- But, groups with high repeat opportunities have even higher value.

SUCCESS FORMULA: Don't be blinded by promises of future business. One group brings many new people into your store for future bookings, even it's a one off group. Future leisure and corporate business will crop up. If you feel good about the annuity factor, be sure your agreement letter gives you right of first refusal for the next group.

10. HOW WILL THE GROUP LEADER PERFORM?

- Your group might have passed my viability test with flying colors but number ten can be the deal breaker. Having a weak group leader nullifies everything else.
- A highly committed group leader who is respected and social will become a powerful magnet.
- People love traveling with people they like and respect. A group leader is a leader and they should serve as one here too.
- They can drive super success or miserable failure.

SUCCESS FORMULA: Meet the group leader and assess their sphere of influence and enthusiasm. Are they in a position of leadership – and do the members follow? Get your group leader fully vested in the success of the group through promotional tasks and incentives. Give tools to the group leader and help make them your sales superstar.

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*“By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.”
- Benjamin Franklin*

What is the most challenging
part of doing groups?

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