

# Tourism Is Key

by Janine Edwards, for AHTA AGM Nov. 18-2016



Two and a half months ago, while engaging with my Runway Anguilla associates in community outreach, I reflect on little Johnny and his siblings, who still are in need assistance to buy books and uniforms so that they can attend school the next week. When you look into little Johnny's eyes when school supplies are delivered to his door and you see his tears of joy and relief all bundled up in one - You reflect.

Protocol being established.... Distinguished officials, ladies and gentlemen a pleasant good evening.

When I think about little Johnny and his siblings, I reflect on the **magnitude**, the **potential** and the **power** of our Tourism industry to **transform the socio-economics of our community** and bring the necessities of a quality life to all.

I reflect and ruminate - that **we all**, whether public or private sector, NGO or individual resident, manager or wait staff – **we all** are charged with optimizing the success of this industry and have an **awesome responsibility**.

The question is, are we maximizing our sector – are we showing in our actions that **Tourism is in Fact key?** Are we all operating as if **Tourism is in fact Everybody's business** and are we doing all we can do to mobilise from a 5 month industry to a year round industry? Anguilla 44 – Right Melinda? 44 weeks of Christmas occupancy in Anguilla. We all know the numbers – we know that 7 out of the 10 countries in the world most dependent on Tourism are in the Caribbean!

We are here this evening, to **reflect, brainstorm and entertain discourse among brilliant minds in Tourism**. Each year we must reflect on how to do things better in Tourism – as ladies and **gentlemen our beloved industry, does** - literally affect the quality of life of each and every resident, especially our most vulnerable.

**Fellow AHTA associates we must take some time to unravel the full meaning of "Tourism is Key" and "Tourism is Everybody's Business**. We must not pay lip service, but streamline all our day to day efforts into "Transforming our Industry for Success through Partnership and Community Engagement".

Ladies and gentlemen as the President mentioned, we have enough external factors against us that we have very little or no control over – Zika, foreign press reports and warnings, social media nightmares, global economy, Trump politics.

Therefore, the internal factors that we **do have control over** we have to seek excellence – go the extra mile – make a difference to have a WOW Tourism industry. We are blessed with many natural assets – our friendly people, fabulous beaches, fine restaurants and accommodation – but the reality is – many places around the world, who take Tourism seriously, are also blessed. **To stand out, we must embrace an attitude that we have to be extraordinary in the delivery of our services within our Tourism offering.**

**A Tourism is Key mindset can look like this:**

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- It means that Fred in his “retirement” can step up and continue to contribute meaningfully to tourism leadership in our country.
- It means that Vida can refer her patrons to also dine at Peter’s restaurant and Erlene encourage guests to check out Vida’s new menu.
- It means that Boards can willingly recruit creative minds who can contribute to diverse **and yes even controversial perspectives** to brainstorm the best way forward for the communal good.
- It means that I can go the extra mile refer a villa booking to Carl if I am fully booked and not simply turn away the guest so he can browse away to seek a villa in St Barths.
- It means that if we see True Anguilla magazine copies running out at the port, we can take the time to give Trudy a call to replenish, so our guests are seamlessly serviced.
- It means that a hotelier can take a young intern to offer a training opportunity, even if it requires extra patience and energy.
- It means that we have to purposefully re-invest in marketing our destination.
- It means that as fellow hospitality associates we can take a moment out to congratulate Kenroy on his environmental initiatives that heighten awareness for a cleaner, greener Anguilla.
- It means that when we as members pick up the phone to register a complaint to Gilda, that we also follow it up with an innovative solution and an offer to help.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have to go beyond the ordinary way of doing business and create and adopt little extraordinary habits that become our new way of business. Tourism is in Fact Key and Tourism is in Fact Everybody’s business.

Ladies and gentlemen let’s step up and live up and give Tourism the maximum respect it deserves!

Little Johnny is depending on us.