

Ideas For The Integrated Development Plan (IDP)

by

By Neal Nixon - Jan. 07/03

I want to take this opportunity to give my "two cents" worth on the issues before the IDP, hoping that it may be of some purpose to the general plan. Specially, my ideas relate to the Ministry of Trade, Tourism, Ports, and Employment; and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Marketing.

In reference to the former, customer service must be a rule, not an option. It should not only be pursued on the basis that it is good for business, but rather, that it is a fundamental ingredient of a civilized and forward moving society - period! As is usually the case with all other programs, a passing grade in customer service can scarcely be achieved until stewards (those at the top), the rank-in-file, adopt and enforce it with the utmost discipline. No country can achieve a high grade in social discipline until government peddles and pursues a program with unwavering dynamism. People immanently look to the top. Late last year, the French Government announced that it will be shifting its investment to Cuba and Curacao because the citizens of Guadeloupe and of Martinique were not customer-friendly. (Of course, their accusations can be met with affirmative nods) This is a reality.

The (National Development Cooperation (NDC) office in New York must reevaluate strategies, and begin to communicate to customers in places where no one expects them to go. New York, Florida and California are saturated with tourism-related businesses dealing with the Caribbean. We need to direct our communication to non-traditional areas, such as Texas, Arkansas, Utah, et cetera. We need to move from using only the mundane vehicles of communication and advertising. With the click of the mouse communication could be sent to thousand of travel agencies across the globe. NDC needs to set up a database of travel agencies, travel writers and travel-related businesses. Developing a relationship with travel writers will surely increase the prospects of Dominica's travel issues getting printed on the major travel publications. This is gratis advertising. We can develop a Nature Island "newsgroup", another inexpensive way to advertise Dominica and to create an online focus group, if you will. To add vigor and vitality to NDC's web presence and effectiveness, a conference or network of all Dominican webmasters who are willing to transfer, upload, advertise, and disseminate vital information could be instrumental in harnessing the resources of Dominica's computer professionals at home and abroad. It is important that the government nurse the networking of our people, so that by degrees we can achieve uppermost levels of cross - fertilization of knowledge. Money is not the only panacea; relationship capital is like a rusty key - unused, unmentioned and unrecognized.

In the area of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) there is vast room for improvement. First, no company will be willing to invest in Dominica until Dominicans at home and abroad are willing to invest in our shared country. This, the government must exude in every step of the way and with a "matter of fact" outlook. The importance of FDI and the ways and means of fostering it should be clearly communicated to our people from top-down. The government of Dominica (GoD) must ignite the flames of Public Private Partnership (PPP). The level of PPP in regions such as Silicon Valley, Sweden, Ireland, Taiwan (regions that attract FDI of no ordinary magnitude and with increasing frequency) is impeccable. We must put people and programs in place that will guide investors through the maze of bureaucracy that hinders investment time, investment levels and investment quality. In the twenty-second century competitive geography product life cycle is getting shorter, and the competition duplicates products with high frequency. The time a company takes to setup shop, and delivers new products is crucial to its competitive edge. It stands to reason that companies would not invest in countries where there are huge piles of bureaucracy hindering progress. Investors must be treated as value friends. They must feel like they are at home with people who care about their interest, and gain their trust.

In the sunrise of Singapore's development, the government of Singapore would contact 40 U.S. companies before being vouchsafed with a single answered - often, it was not a favorable one. The investment guide, "Dominica: An investment profile" authored by the NDC should be rewritten to include information to attract all categories of investments. This investment guide is heavily bent on tourism investment, which to my estimation is a fatal oversight. Our FDI package must consist of a high doze of incentives to investment in the area of semiconductor, electronics, smart technology, research, and development. History carry backward and moving forward indicates that countries that are at the forefront of development are those who adopt and produce the prevailing technology of the day. Dominica needs to sway its young children in the area of math, science and entrepreneurial training. Trained talent as well as entrepreneurial talent is the yeast that transforms a country and makes it rise. We ought to step away, immediately, from the system of the "begging bowl" and into one that recognize people as the greatest asset a nation could ever have.

In the area of marketing, we must recognize, fully, the marked reality that we are a small nation. Small nations should have their marketing headquarters in big and prosperous nations in the midst of the customers. Many Israeli Companies have their marketing operations in the U.S. or Europe. It is apparent that in order to better understand the customer demands, one needs to be in closed and often contact with the customers. As a wake up call to us all, the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) (US TRADE OFFICE) reported that Dominica's Import/Export ratio with the U.S. is 6:1. This transcends belief, Lamentable in the first degree. In light of the CBI's revelation, I advance that we use the NDC office in New York as not only a tourism office, but also a trade office, an import/export office, if you will. Through this office, Dominica's companies will receive information on trade leads, food expos, importers and distributors et cetera. The office could also serve as a medium where Dominicans in the Diaspora could assist gratis in channeling Products from Dominica to U.S. customers. Trade offices in the French Caribbean will also be a plus.

In addition, the Buy-Local campaign put on by DEXIA should change to a Buy-Dominica. People can not be persuaded to buy products that they plant in their back yard. With a BuyDominica program we will showcase our product to the world and not just to 70 thousand people. The present engagements of the Diaspora is a datum, a feeble fraction in comparison to what can be pushed and peddled if the GoD would officially recognize the importance and inevitability of the Diaspora in the protection, preservation, and provision of many of the essential elements of our common home. To ignore the fruits of the Diaspora is comparable to overlooking the goose whose eggs - though may not be golden - are indispensable. Every citizen, whether at home or abroad, must be given a stake in the countRy and its future. The government must draw everyone to maximum engagement - a system in which both black cats and white cats catch mice. I advance that the GoD creates a Dominica Diaspora Office to help channel the resources as well as articulate the concerns of the Diaspora. Whether we like it or not, the Diaspora is, without question and reservation, a sector of Dominica's economy. The Diaspora is willing and able to help. Give us a mandate and we will follow. It is time that those at home and those abroad work hand in glove. For this to occur the GoD must clear the smoke and indicate to all our people, that like Benjamin Franklin who stayed in France for a long period of time, negotiating on Americas' behalf, we can serve as negotiators, for we are already ambassadors in the true sense of the word.

In the area of marketing research, I am more than willing to help in constructing and analyzing surveys. Dominicans should do everything that can be done by Dominicans. It is ample time that we begin to drink from the fountainhead of our intellectual reservoir.

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