

PIONEER HOTEL

RURAL ROUNDUP

2026

ELKO





# FOUNDATIONS OF TOURISM MARKETING

Building Confidence Through Core Concepts

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## SUSAN MICHELLE

### **Creative Director**

Susan is the Creative Director for Travel Nevada and has worked there for 9 years. She's been in the marketing and advertising industry for 25 years, yet she doesn't look a day over 25. It's quite miraculous.

We think she's pretty awesome. And yes, she wrote this herself.

# INTRODUCTION

# The Rural Reality: You are the “Accidental Marketer”

**Stop guessing and  
start growing!**



# RULES OF THE ROOM



No such thing as a dumb question.



Jargon is the enemy.



Action over perfection.

PLEASE INSOR

A.C.R.O.  
N.Y.M.S

A man with dark hair, glasses, and a red shirt is looking upwards with a surprised expression. The background is a chalkboard filled with various mathematical diagrams and formulas. In the top left, there's a circle with a radius line labeled 'r'. To its right is the volume formula for a cone:  $V = \frac{1}{3} \pi r^2 h$ . Below that is a diagram of a cone with height 'h' and radius 'r'. In the bottom right, there's a coordinate system with a vertical axis labeled 'tan(θ)' and values '10' and '5'. The text 'PLEASE INSOR' is written in a white, sans-serif font in the upper left. The large, stylized text 'A.C.R.O. N.Y.M.S' is in the center. In the bottom left, there's a logo consisting of two overlapping triangles, one red and one blue. At the bottom, the letters 'KPI' and 'DC' are partially visible.




KPI

DC



**“JARGON JAR!”**

# THE 3 PILLARS OF SUCCESS

-  **The House (Baseline)** = Your Identity, Assets & Entryways
-  **The Engine (Ecosystem)** = Your Sales Funnel, Website & Email
-  **The Megaphone (Fuel)** = Your Promotions, Ads, and  
Partnerships

Establish Your Baseline:

# THE HOUSE

**Let's get your house  
in order.**



# 1

## **IDENTITY & AUDIENCE:** The Foundation

## Why It Matters:

# FINDING YOUR SIGNAL

### Clear the Static

If your identity is fuzzy, guests tune you out.

### Find Your Listener

Stop trying to talk to everyone. Find the traveler who loves what you do.



# MIRROR VS. WINDOW

## The Mirror (Identity)

Who are you *actually*? (Quiet Porch or Rowdy Steakhouse?)

## The Window (Audience)

Who is looking through the glass for you?

## Compatibility

Does your "Mirror" match what the guest sees through the "Window"?



# FACTS VS STORY

## More than a Logo

Facts=Boring vs. Story=Branding

## The Vibe Check

Every photo and greeting builds or breaks your story.

## Identity

You aren't just a category—you are an **experience**.



# 2

## **MARKETING ASSETS:**

### The Interior Design

## Why It Matters:

# VISUAL EVIDENCE

### Stop the Static

High-quality assets remove the **fear of the unknown.**

### The Signal

Great photos prove your story is **real.**

### Forever Yours

These assets are your property **forever.**



# SHOW OFF WHO YOU ARE

## Photos

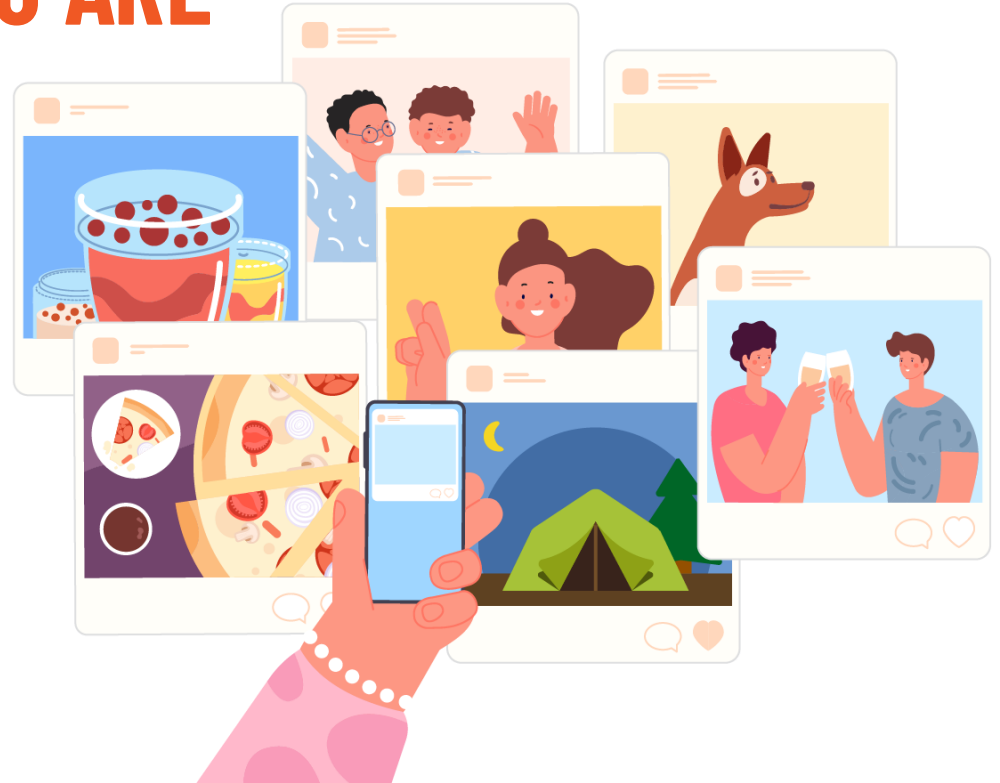
Authentic > Expensive.

## Video

Capture the motion and the emotion.

## The 2026 Standard

Guests want to see the soul of the place, not a staged stock photo.



**If a picture is worth a thousand  
words, a 10-second video is worth  
a thousand pictures.**

# TAKE ME WITH YOU!

## Collateral

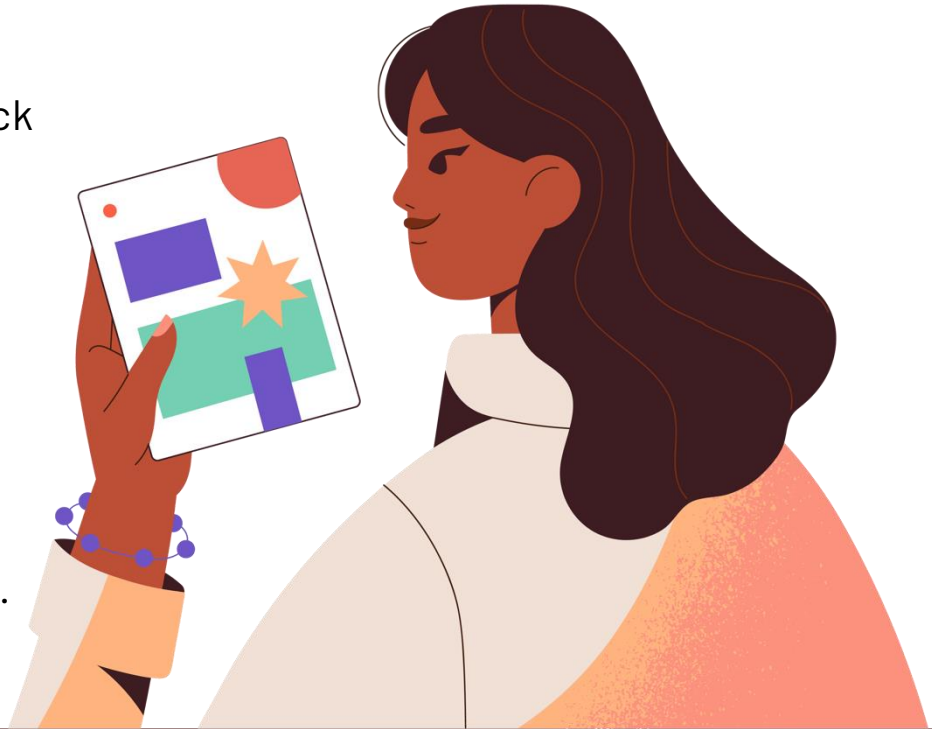
Your leave-behind materials (Brochures, Rack Cards, PDFs).

## The Pro Tip

Collateral is the content. Advertising is the megaphone.

## The Rule

Fix your content before you pay to amplify it.



# ACTIVITY



**THE PERFECT MATCH**



# 3

## **THE FRONT DOORS & LOBBY:** The Entryway

# Why It Matters: **THE 2-DOOR RULE**

## **The Physical Door**

Your street presence.

## **The Digital Door**

Your smartphone presence.

## **The Lock**

If either is hard to find, the guest goes home.



# WHAT'S YOUR SIGN?

## Digital Signage

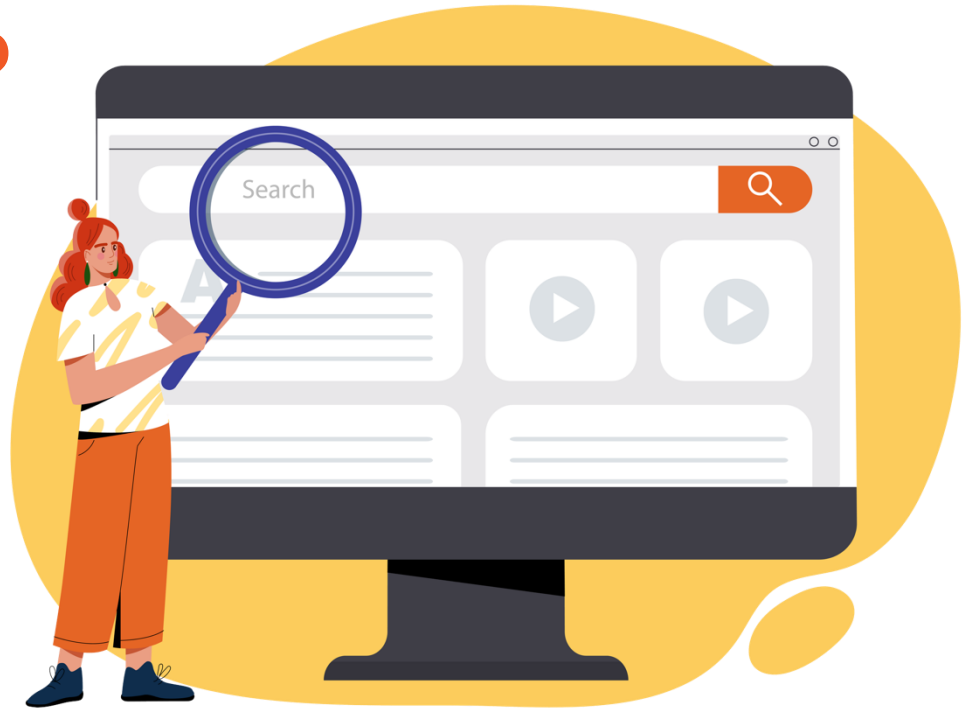
Your '**Online Door.**' Your Google Maps profile and your lobby (your homepage).

## Physical Signage

Your '**Street Door.**' Can a tourist see you at 35mph?

## The Consistency Test

If your digital hours don't match your street door, trust is lost.



# ACTIVITY

 **THE FRONT DOOR AUDIT** 

Build Your Ecosystem:

# THE ENGINE



**Create a system that  
works while you sleep.**

1

**THE SALES FUNNEL:**  
The Strategy

# Why It Matters: **THE CUSTOMER MAP**

## **The Route**

The **Funnel** is the path a stranger takes to become a guest.

## **The Vehicles**

Your website, social media, and word-of-mouth are the "cars" that move them.

## **Clear the Signal**

Map the journey to stop wasting time and money.



# THE VISITOR'S JOURNEY

## The Route

Moving them from "Just Looking" to "Packing Bags."

## Trust is Frictionless

Avoid confusing directions—those create **Marketing Static.**

## The Paved Highway

Providing the right info at every stop on the journey.



# THE THREE STAGES



## Top (Awareness)

"I didn't know this place existed!" (Social Media, Word of Mouth)

## Middle (Interest)

"This looks like my kind of vibe." (Website, Google Reviews)

## Bottom (Action)

"I'm going. Booking now." (Email, Booking Links, Directions)



# ACTIVITY



## THE LEAKY FUNNEL



# 2

## **THE WEBSITE:** The Home Base

Why It Matters:

# THE DECISION MAKER

## The Conversion Hub

This is the "Middle" and "Bottom" of your funnel.

## Function Over Fashion

It's not an art project; it's a destination with a job to do.

## The 2026 Signal

In the age of AI search, content is your currency.



# YOUR DIGITAL LOBBY

## Mobile-First

Your Lobby is usually a **5-inch screen** in a moving car.

## The 3-Second Rule

Within three seconds, a guest must know **Who, Where,** and **How to Buy.**

## Ready When They Are

If the “Book Now” button is **easy to find**, they’ll know where to go when they’re ready to buy.



# BLOGS, SEO, AND AI... OH MY!

## SEO (Search Engine Optimization)

Simply means "Being easy to find."

## AI Search

AI "reads" your content to recommend you to travelers.

## The Strategy

Write the answers to the questions your **Perfect Match** is asking.



# 3

## **THE EMAIL NEWSLETTER:** The Safety Net

# Why It Matters:

# OWNED VS RENTED LAND

## The Follow-Up Engine

90% of visitors aren't ready to book *today*.

## The Land Grab

Social Media is a **rented apartment**.  
Email is the **house you own**.

## The Blackout Test

If Facebook vanished tomorrow, who could you still reach?



# CAPTURING THE LEAD

## Not Just a Newsletter

Frame it as **'Capturing the Lead.'**

## The Value Exchange

Give them a **reason to join** (e.g., 'The Secret Guide to Elko' or 'Event First-Access').

## The Simple Start

Even a clipboard on your counter or a **'First-to-Know'** list is a safety net.



# THE ROI HERO

## Best ROI

Email has the highest return of any marketing tool.

## The 80% Rule

One email a month puts you ahead of 80% of your competition.

## The Simple Formula

One Story, One Event, and One Offer.



Use Your Megaphone:

**THE FUEL**



**Pick your promotional  
battles.**



1

**RULE OF 7:**  
The Trust Journey

# Why It Matters:

# CLOSING THE TRUST GAP

## The Stranger's Hesitation

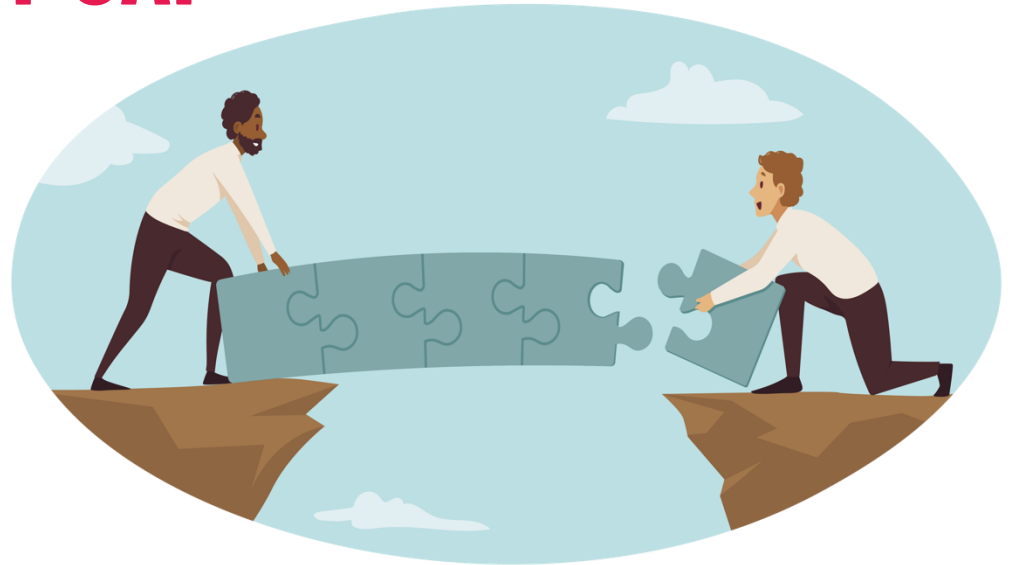
A traveler rarely hits "Book Now" on the first encounter.

## The Magic Number

On average, a guest needs **7 "touches"** to feel safe enough to commit.

## The Commitment

Seven touches prove you are real, reliable, and **absolutely worth the drive.**



# START DATING

## The First Date (Awareness)

"Hi, we exist and we're beautiful." (social posts, ads).

## The Second Date (Interest)

They're leaning in, visiting your **lobby** (website).

## The Long-Term Relationship (Trust)

Showing up again & again (email, retargeting).



# SIGNAL CONSISTENCY

## Don't Ghost Your Guest

One touch is a fluke; seven touches is a relationship.

## The Frequency Check

Are you showing up once a month or once a week?

## The Goal

Be the most reliable signal in their "Radio" dial.



2

**ORGANIC VS. PAID =**  
Sweat vs. Spark

Why It Matters:

# CHOOSING YOUR CURRENCY

## Two Currencies

You can spend your Time (Organic) or your Money (Paid).

## The Resource Balance

There is no "right" way—only the way that fits your current tank.

## The Signal Rule

Neither fuel works if your foundation is full of static.



# When To Sweat It: **ORGANIC POWER**

## **What is Sweat**

Your daily stories, your handshakes, and your word-of-mouth.

## **The Long Game**

It's slow, it builds trust, and it's how you show your soul.

## **The 2026 Reality**

Guests crave the real you. This is where you prove you aren't a robot.



# When To Spark It:

# PAID POWER

## The Accelerant

Use your money when you have a deadline or a specific goal.

## Filling the House

Use the spark for festivals, workshops, or slow seasons.

## The Megaphones

Facebook Ads, Paid Partnerships, Billboards.



# THE FUEL MENU



## Search Ads (Google)

Catch them while they are actively looking for "food" or "hotels."



## Social Media Ads

Reaching new people based on their vibe (Hiking, History, etc.).



## Influencers

Letting a trusted voice show off your "Soul" to their audience.



## Print & Magazines

Best for the "Road Warrior" or "Heritage Hunter" who still loves a physical map.



## Email Blasts

The fastest way to bring back "Old Friends."



## Events & Tabling

Building real-life trust right to your potential "Perfect Matches."

# ACTIVITY



## FUELING THE FIRE



# 3

## THE "\$0 STRATEGY": Guerrilla Marketing Tactics

Why It Matters:

# THE RESOURCE MULTIPLIER

## The Force Multiplier

Use leverage to turn small, existing tools into a massive impact.

## Beyond the Budget

Creativity is the only currency with no limit.

## The Signal Boost

Small, clever actions cut through static better than big, expensive ones.



# WON'T YOU BE MY NEIGHBOR?

## The Bundle Benefit

- Combine forces to create a new product.
- Have a **"History & Hops"** pass that includes museum entry plus antique shop discount, and a brewery flight.

## The Walkable Advantage

- Rural Nevada owns the walkable downtown.
- Create a **"Main Street Loop"** to give guests an afternoon itinerary with a single price point.



# STATEWIDE SIGNALS

## Urban Launchpads

Use Reno and Vegas as the "Front Doors" to the rural experience.

## The Big Megaphone

Leverage **Travel Nevada** and your **Territory** to maximize reach and resources.



- Rural Marketing Grants
- Destination Dev. Grants
- Travel Nevada's Website
- Partner Co-Ops
- FAM Tours
- Sales Missions

# YOUR DIGITAL INTERN

## Use AI to Your Advantage

AI isn't here to replace you—it's here to do the chores.

## The Blank Page Fixer

AI handles the first draft—you provide the heart.

## Content Generation

Turn one **soulful** story into five social posts and an email in seconds.



# ACTIVITY



**AI-POWERED PARTNERSHIP**






# WRAP-UP

**It's finally time to start  
your engines.**



# THE BIG THREE RECAP

-  **The House (Baseline)** = Your Identity, Assets & Entryways
-  **The Engine (Ecosystem)** = Your Sales Funnel, Website & Email
-  **The Fuel (Megaphone)** = Your Promotions, Ads & Partnerships

## Pillar 1: Establish Your Baseline

# THE HOUSE

### The Work

Cleared the **static**, identified your **steady** guest, and audited your **front door**.

### The Result

A clean, welcoming digital home ready for your best guest.



## Pillar 2: Build Your Ecosystem

# THE ENGINE

### The Work

Plugged your **leaky funnel**, looked at a **mobile first experience** and chose a **lead magnet**.

### The Result

A tight, efficient system built to convert strangers into fans.



## Pillar 3: Use Your Megaphone

# THE FUEL

### The Work


Balanced **sweat vs. spark**,  
picked your **90-Day Fuel** and  
learned how to find help—from  
your neighbors and AI.

### The Result


A clear, amplified **Signal** that  
multiplies reach without burnout.



# THE MONDAY MORNING RULE

 **The Reality:** Don't try to change everything at once.

 **The Action:** Use the **Monday Morning Checklist** to stay on track.

 **The Goal:** Small wins lead to big momentum.

**Stop waiting for flawless.  
Done it better than perfect.**



**THANK YOU!**



