

Richmond's Tasting House finds the online ingredient to success



Customer: Tasting House

Key Facts:

- Local small business
- Newly acquired business
- Various public tasting and events

Challenge:

- Local business which had a minimal online presence and needed to acquire customers and get their name out into the market

Solution:

- New website with an online shop

Results:

- Increased market presence
- Increased enquiries and sales

Home to some of the world's best beaches, wine and gourmet food, Tasmania is becoming a much loved holiday destination for both domestic and International travellers – however, the small island of only half a million residents is a gem that is still waiting to really be discovered.

In the past year, Tasmania has seen nearly a million visitors and of these travellers, 70 percent visit Tasmania purely for leisure, with the majority heading straight to Hobart and its surrounding areas. Here, they can meander through the Salamanca market (on Saturdays), relax by the waterfront while sipping a local Riesling, play a round of golf, indulge in award winning cuisine or explore the city's historic and modern art collections.

Many, however, decide to swap the bustling city and its oceanic views for a countryside retreat and head out to the rolling hills and Georgian heritage of south-east Tasmania. It is here, amongst some of the island's famous vineyards that Julie Crane's Tasting House resides.

Boutique shop feeds local tourist appetite

Tasting House, a gourmet food and wine boutique, has been operating in Richmond for eight years. Julie, who acquired the business in 2009, said the shop is a testament to the local Tasmanian produce and a must-stop destination for visitors, international or otherwise.

"To show our customers exactly what Tasmania has to offer, we only stock local produce and only provide our customers with products from gourmet and boutique vineyards and distilleries," she says.

"We provide our customers with a deep and thorough history of the area and knowledge of the products when they taste them, so they go back with a whole understanding of the region." The range of activities the business provides also includes private wine tastings, tours and even mini jazz festivals.

Food for thought

Despite all these activities, Julie says it was initially a big challenge for tourists to find out about the Tasting House.

"Being a small business, and one located regionally, we don't have a huge budget to get the word out about our services," she says. "So, when I purchased the business I made sure one of the first things we did was get the shop a website and start operating online."

To get things rolling, Julie initially organised an email box, so she could communicate with vendors and customers and purchased a domain name through Melbourne IT.

"After registering my domain name with Melbourne IT and experiencing a really successful working relationship, I knew they would be the best option for my website," she says. "Plus, they didn't force me to blow out on my budget, which was important to me as money at the time was a constraint."

“ I can't speak more highly of the website services Melbourne IT provided ”

Julie Crane, Owner, Tasting House

"It was a necessity for us to get online so as soon as we got the information from Melbourne IT we didn't wait."

Acquiring a taste for the web

Julie says that having the website has been a huge help to her and has significantly benefited the business.

"It put Tasting House into the public arena," she says. "Since the website was launched in March we have received a number of orders both through the website and over the phone after they saw products on the website."

"Being online really helps me to communicate to our customers about upcoming events and wine tours, share information with my suppliers as well as provide information about our food and wine club – a program which sees customers receive six bottles of wine and produce direct to their door every six months."

Initially Julie had planned on just putting up a basic website with contact information, but after receiving advice from Melbourne IT, she decided to also include an online shopping site.

"It was the best addition we could have made," she says. "It shows how passionate we are about our business and has helped us appear to be the professional business that we are."

"I can't speak more highly of the website services Melbourne IT provided," she says. "I was in full control the whole time, which was fantastic as well as rare. My website is simple to use, however, if I have any problems I know I can phone Melbourne IT and they will assist me straight away."

Julie says the future of Tasting House will be inextricably linked to their online presence.

"We like to ensure that tourists experience Tasmania in every which way they can," Julie says. "Eventually, we would like to expand our business and having a web presence like this is central to that plan succeeding."

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