

Gap Analysis -Current Performance

The current on-line booking system allows for on-line reservations, but does not prevent customers from overbooking a tour or lesson, or show clients that a certain tour is full.

Overbooking means that there are too many customers for the number of kayaks available for the tour, or too many surf students to safely teach the lesson for the allotted instructors. The process is as follows and can be seen at www.khkss.com.

1. The client selects the tour of their choice which has a link to Google Calendar for the dates and times the tour is offered.
2. They then click a book button and receive a PDF file link for a "Crucial Kayak Tour & Surf Lesson" document about what to bring to the tour, where to meet and directions to the tour site. Ideally the customer prints this for their records.
3. Then they click the Pay Now button for the tour via PayPal. The customer then is taken to PayPal's site for a secure PayPal transaction which funnels the money into the company's bank account.
4. After they pay for the tour, an e-mail is received from PayPal to Kitty Hawk Kayak's website saying that John Doe has booked a specific tour. However it does not tell the managers the time or date of the tour. It also does not account for the finite number of spaces available for the tour or lesson.
5. Then the managers e-mail the customers to verify the tour time, date and obtain a cell phone number.

This has proven to be ineffective as employees frequently have to reschedule the customers, or even worse refund the money because the client is upset or unable to do the tour at a different time because of their schedule. It is also necessary to constantly e-mail customers who have on-

line bookings to verify the date and time of their tour. This leaves a poor attitude with the customer as it is unprofessional and unorganized. For the company and its workers, this is embarrassing and trifling. It also places a strain on the managers to have to change schedules, move boats from different locations, and deal with customers that are not satisfied.

There is also an antiquated paper reservations system that consists of a binder listing the type of tour or surf lesson, the time of the tour, which ones have booked, who is going on that particular tour, their contact information (a cell phone number) and who the guide is for the tour (see appendix for examples of the paper forms). This book is kept at the office at 6150 North Croatan Highway in Kitty Hawk, NC. There is a reservationist there who is responsible for answering the phones, booking tours, providing customers with information about our services and taking the payment information of our customers. A typical phone transaction is as follows:

1. A customer calls our office inquiring about a kayak tour or surf lesson.
2. The reservationist answers all the customer's questions and closes the sale by confirming them on a tour. They give the customer the tour time, driving directions, information on what to wear and what to bring to the tour or lesson.
3. The client provides the reservationist with a cell phone number, credit card number and number of customers, and the credit card is charged.
4. The reservationist records all of this data into the tour binder and makes contact with the guides or instructors to confirm the tour time, group size and location.

At the end of the day after closing time, the business phone line is forwarded to the managers' cell phone and they field calls until 10 PM. The person closing the shop is responsible

for bringing the book to the managers' home so that they can book the tours appropriately. Logistically this is a nightmare because there is an "information blackout" after the phones have been forwarded and before the managers actually receive the book. If a customer calls before the book arrives, the managers do not know what tours are available and what tours have been filled. A full analysis of the reservation process, including those over the phone, internet and retail locations, can be found in Appendix A.

All of the information that appears in the book needs to be accessible to the managers, kayak guides, surf instructors, secretary and customers all at the same time, and from various different locations. Logistically this is impossible as the book can only be in one place at one time as there is only one book. This results in many problems such as guides not showing up for scheduled tours, guides confusing the meet times, customers confusing the meet times, customers showing up to the wrong location, guides showing up at the wrong locations, and at times over-booking tours. Once again, employees have to reschedule, or refund the money. Similar to the online booking system, the paper system is flawed in that a limited number of people can see it at a given time. This results in mistakes that can potentially cause a loss in customers and potential business. Refer to Appendix B for a graphical representation of reservations that were lost last year due to problems in the reservation process.

Desired Performance & Gap

The ideal situation for this company would be a twofold approach resulting in an improved reservation system and method of communication amongst employees. Ideally, the reservations bookkeeping system would be seamless, allowing customers to schedule tours and pay, as well as giving Kitty Hawk Kayaks the necessary information about the scheduled tours. Given the

different locations from which reservations are processed, it is preferable to have a system that is accurate and limits the movement of information from place to place. For example, an employee would not have to call from a satellite location to give reservation information. Also, an employee would not have to bring a hard copy of the reservation book to the managers' home. In a model system, there would be a central point of reference for any staff member to refer to in the event of an inquiry. This system would also have a history feature which would allow staff to check for previous reservations and possibly errors. Ultimately this system would not allow overbooking to occur as well.

It is the goal of the company to have an online reservations document that lists what is considered to be the most important information. This includes the type of tour or surf lesson, the time of the tour, which tours and lessons have booked, which customers are going on that particular tour, their contact information (a cell phone number), the location of the tour, driving directions to the tour/lesson, what to bring to the tour or lesson, a copy of the waiver, Kitty Hawk Kayak's contact information, who the guide is for the tour and the guides' contact information. This information would be accessible to the managers, kayak guides, surf instructors, secretary and customers all at the same time, and from various different locations. This would allow for greater information sharing between all parties and improve not only operations, but customer relations, scheduling, organization, work flow and access to information.

If a tour or lesson has been booked, the information needs to be provided to the guides, instructors, managers, secretary, reservationists and customers. All of the aforementioned information should be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and months in advance.

Guides and instructors need to be fully informed as soon in advance as possible. This would eliminate confusion and they would be available at the correct place and time for tours.

The first area to be improved is that involving the reservation system. The current process involves a physical record book that is circulated between a commercial location and the manager's residence each day. The previously stated commercial location juggles the reservations that are created at either the main location, two affiliate locations in satellite locations or processed via online or phone orders. Because there is only one master copy of the reservations being processed, there is no central point of reference for any staff member to refer to in the event of an inquiry. As well, no form of error-checking exists. Therefore, trips can be overbooked to the point of not having adequate equipment or staffing, and thus customers are denied their tour.

An ideal reservation system would resolve all of the above stated issues. Clients should be able to create a reservation at the main location, two satellite locations, or by phone or internet and receive the same information from any locale. All of the information processing would happen synchronously to give accurate descriptions of the current availability of the trips or reservations in question. An error-catching mechanism would exist as well that would actively check for any over-booking that may occur in the reservation system and would prevent any bookkeeping errors. This would result in increased revenue for the business as well as increased customer satisfaction as the business would see a decrease in the number of cancellations and refunds due to inaccurate bookkeeping. This system would also manage and send out information to customers, including reservation confirmation as well as any general information necessary for their trip. This would not only reassure the customer and increase satisfaction but

would also lead to a decrease in the volume of phone calls and e-mail inquiries that the company receives. This leaves more time for the staff members to attend to other tasks and improve the customer's experience.

The second improvement revolves around increasing communication between the staff members of the company. Due to an improved system of record-keeping, employees would be made more aware of the company's bookings. That way, staff members would always know when they are scheduled for a trip and information about the clients joining them on the tour. There would no longer be any questions about scheduling or the equipment needed for an excursion.

With the improved reservation system and communication method in place, the company would be able to book and keep clients consistently. This gives them an advantage they did not previous have and would likely lead to increased revenue as well as increased customer satisfaction.