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#TenQuestions with Saugat Adhikari ||Articles|| 2022-03-07 13:49:44

Contributors

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After #TenQuestions with Ashish Shrestha, we are back with yet another edition of #TenQuestions and we continue with one more young tourism entrepreneur, Saugat Adhikari.
Saugat Adhikari is co-founder of Magical Nepal, a trekking agency in Nepal. He also run several blogs in different niches. After working for 3 years as an SEO Consultant, Saugat started Magical Nepal with co-founder Pradeep with just $10. They are now handling more than 100 groups in a year.

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1. How did an IT guy start blogging and end up in the tourism industry?

It's actually the other way round – I started blogging before IT. My first blog was about Linux and open source. I wanted to have a better understanding of the technology so I decided to study computers.
Over time, I realized that my real passion was Digital marketing. I worked in different companies and finally decided to do something of my own. I wanted to work on something that has a physical presence. After a bit of research, I found tourism as a profitable industry.
That's when I met with Pradeep over a cup of coffee. Pradeep was already involved in tourism. We decided to start a new venture with a Kanchenjunga trek. This trek started what would soon turn into Magical Nepal after 6 months.

2. What makes Magical Nepal different from its competitors?

> We started Magical Nepal from $10. We bootstrap the entire business. I understand technology better than most of the competitors. Pradeep has a good understanding of our products (travel destinations). These together give us a competitive advantage.

95% of our clients find us on the internet while other 5% are referral clients. It wouldn't have been possible without the internet. We are focusing on producing great content.
We are using technology for our operations which saves us a lot of time. For instance: **Our booking system informs us about new bookings, arrivals via SMS. We can select our guide from our system. It immediately notifies the guide about the trip via SMS.**
We get an SMS reminder a day before and another one an hour before the guests' arrival. If we have chosen the guide for that specific trip the guide gets these SMS reminders as well.

3. What is the one thing that gives Nepal a competitive edge as a tourist destination?

Nepal is an adventure tourist destination. There are few places on earth that are designed particularly for adventure tourism. Nepal's landscape and mountain makes it a great adventure tourist destination.

> At present, Nepal is still struggling to attract non-adventure tourists. We are trying to change that by designing activities that involve actually doing stuff.

4. From your experience, what is the best time to visit Nepal?

Well, it depends on what you want to do in Nepal. If you are coming for a trek, Spring (Mid March to Mid May). and Autumn (Mid September to Mid November) are the best.

5. Do you accept international online payment straight from your website?

Yes, We accept PayPal. We are in a process to integrate credit card into our booking system.
We have our sales process. When a client agrees to book a trip with us, we give them our booking link. He/she fills the necessary information and make the payment via PayPal.
At this point, we have all their information – including arrival time and date, trekking start date, and end date. Our system automatically notifies us about it.

6. Who takes the biggest cut when a tourist comes to Nepal and spends a week or two trekking here?

When a tourist comes to a Nepal, the whole country gets to enjoy the benefits. Tourists pay a lot of money for permit and visa. They book their hotel for their stay and a trekking/travel company for their trip. They hire people for the trip. They eat and sleep along the tea houses.

> From the outside, it may seem that the travel/trekking company takes the biggest cut. Yet, we distribute the cost in different sectors. The sectors include government (permits, food, lounge), transportation (transport company), airline, guide/porter.

Example: When a tourist book the Everest base camp trek with Magical Nepal, we arrange their hotel in Kathmandu, their stay in the mountains, and other basic needs. We take them to dinner during their last day. We get a big chunk of money but we distribute to different aspects of their travel elements.

7. As a blogger and digital marketer, what do you think separates good content from great?

Great content gives clear information about the topics to the readers. It should be a customer-centric rather than sales centric.
Example: At Magical Nepal we publish lots of travel guides that are not sales centric. We provide this information for free for all the travelers that are coming to Nepal.
With this kind of content, we are creating value. Our clients always find it interesting and send us their first inquiry to book a trip.

8. Can someone earn a living just by writing content?

Yes, There are tons of writers who are making a living by writing articles. If you want to establish your career as a content writer, you have plenty of options.

> You can be a product reviewer, blog content writer, copywriter or a ficitional writer. The choice is yours. The internet has opened up several opportunities for writers.

If you are looking to start your career as a content writer, you can contact us. We are always on the lookout for writers.

9. In recent days, you ventured into the hotel industry as well. How is running a hotel different from running a travel agency?

Well, both are sensitive industries. In a hotel, you have to create an experience for their stay. You have to be careful with small details. There are lots of guests that check-in daily and check-out from the hotel.
In a travel agency, the goal is to make their visit to Nepal worthwhile. There are less clients and it is easier to build personalized relationships.

10. There are a lot of people studying BBA in Nepal who are good at writing. Suppose, someone like that wants to start earning passive income as a professional blogger. What would you suggest him/her?

Start something that is pretty small and choose a topic you are passionate about. Always start with a specific niche. Don't focus on a broad area. There are already big corporate websites and blogs to do that.
Learn the techniques to drive traffic to your blog. ***When you are hungry for traffic, you will learn several ways***. Be patient for at least 6 months to a year.
Next, learn the techniques to monetize your blog or website. You can start with Amazon Affiliate or Google Adsense. When you have built up your confidence, you can try selling your own products.
The King's team would like to thank Saugat for telling us such a great story. The story of founding a startup with just $10 is an inspiration to all our BBA/MBA students.