



2023 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title: Creating a "Disaster Prevention Culture" Community by Developing Training Programs with the Locals: Building a System to Secure Financial and Human Resources by Commercializing "Cultural Heritage"

Destination, Country: Kamaishi, Japan

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In the category: Destination Management Environment & Climate Thriving Communities
 Nature & Scenery Culture & Tradition Business & Marketing

The Story in a picture:

Scene from a training program on disaster prevention and forestry



Summary:

(1) Challenges

Kamaishi City established the "Memory Keeper of the Great Earthquake Disaster System" in 2019, a certification system for guiding personnel who pass on the events of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami in 2011 and the lessons learned from the disaster to future generations. However, the system faced a challenge due to the passage of 12 years since the disaster. As the disaster faded away, it became difficult to secure human resources to engage the system and maintain their motivation.

(2) Solutions

A local DMO, Kamaishi DMC, has secured financial resources through "training programs" involving local businesses in tsunami disaster prevention and selling those training programs to large corporations. This has allowed local human resources to be hired for the long term. The programs focus mainly on "reconstruction community planning" and "disaster prevention management", and they usually take 3 to 4 days in total, with 5 to 30 participants.





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(3) Results

Involving local businesses and communities in the creation of the training programs has promoted local understanding and has increased the number of new collaborators.

Furthermore, when large companies from outside the region paid for the training and learned about Kamaishi's tsunami disaster prevention culture, a self-sustaining cycle has been established. The participation fees received from these companies have helped fund the communication of tsunami damage and have ensured the continuous dissemination of the disaster prevention culture to elementary, junior high and high schools in the region.

Additionally, the program has started to be exported to developing countries overseas, further expanding its impact.



Good Practice Story:

Destination description

Brief background of the destination.

Kamaishi City is located on the Pacific Ocean side of northern Japan, halfway up the Sanriku Sea, one of the three largest fishing grounds in the world. Surrounded by four small bays and 1,300-meter class mountains, it is a place blessed with a rich nature including four clear rivers flowing through it.

Kamaishi was once just a normal fishing village, which succeeded in iron production from iron ore in 1857, contributing to the industrial modernization of Japan. Kamaishi has continued to move forward as the birthplace of modern iron manufacturing.

On the other hand, the Great East Japan Earthquake struck in 2011, killing more than 1,000 people in Kamaishi City. During World War II, Kamaishi City experienced a number of difficulties, including the damage caused by naval artillery fire.

Although Kamaishi City is located in the Sanriku Fukko National Park, there are no well-known symbolic tourist attractions. In addition, access from the major metropolitan area of Tokyo is over 6 hours, so the city needs to develop attractive tourist content as a destination.

For this reason, Kamaishi was one of the first regions in Japan to adopt the GSTC standards and began working on them in 2016 to determine how and what kind of tourism regional developments should be implemented.

The Kamaishi City Comprehensive Plan implemented in 2021, includes a plan to increase the number of people who are involved in the community by attracting visitors through tourism.

Issues faced

Problems/issues solved with the Good Practice Story.

The Great East Japan Earthquake struck in 2011, and after 12 years, reconstruction projects have been completed. Until then, many tours to see and hear about the affected areas were conducted, but as time passed, the number of people participating in these tours began to decline.

As the number declined, the activity budgets of organizations that disseminated the "culture of disaster prevention" decreased. Also, the declining motivation of the staff and the number of storytellers about the tsunami damage became a challenge because of the lack of prospects for their activities. Kamaishi was one such city.

Methods, steps, and tools applied

Solutions implemented to address the sustainability problems or issues.

1. Steps

1) As we predicted in the future situation described above, we planned the training programs to secure budgets and human resources to pass on the lessons from the disaster with consideration for the local economic, cultural, and environmental aspects.

2) The DMO, City Hall and local stakeholders cooperated to develop the programs and conducted training for large companies. We established a PDCA cycle to enhance the quality of those programs based on feedback from the participants.

3) Once test sales of the training products began, the number of sales increased by word of mouth.

2. Information Sources and Resources

The CEO of the DMO had experience involved in the training business in his previous job. In addition, the DMO hired some employees with training developmental and operational know-how.

3. Stakeholders

- Tsunami Traditions Facility Steering Committee (one of the local communities) has cooperated in creating the programs on disaster prevention culture.
- Kamaishi Regional Forestry Association has provided mountain forest training and carbon offset for transportation of the visitors.
- Ohakozaki Citizens' Council (an organization made up of fishermen) has provided a fishing experience training menu.
- Tohoku University Graduate School provided information regarding the training menu on architecture.
- Kamaishi City School Officials, Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, etc.
- Training companies in the Tokyo metropolitan area have sold the programs.

Key success factors

Critical elements that led to successfully solving the issues.

An internal factor was that a community-wide momentum to accept corporate training programs was created by developing those training programs involving stakeholders in the fishing and forestry industries, and local community groups. The cooperation among stakeholders also worked when running those programs, and as a result, the satisfaction of the visiting companies increased. This has also increased the motivation of the staff involved in these programs, which in turn has led to program improvements, creating a virtuous cycle that has resulted in better program management.

As for external factors, in the midst of changes in the social system due to the spread of COVID-19, large companies in the Tokyo metropolitan area increased their demand for business revitalization and new business development after the pandemic. Furthermore, they showed interest in Kamaishi's efforts to help them recover from the Great East Japan Earthquake. The companies that received the training voluntarily encouraged their own companies and other organizations to participate in the programs in Kamaishi. This has allowed us to sell those training programs without any public relations efforts.

Lessons learned

Challenges faced while implementing the Good Practice and their solutions.

(1) Challenges

One of the challenges we faced was the difficulty in passing on the experience and the lessons of the earthquake to the next generation, as memories of the disaster gradually fade over time.

Another issue was whether it was possible for the training participants to truly feel Kamaishi's disaster prevention culture. To create inspiring training programs, we needed not only to summarize the facts but also to compile what the residents of the time thought, acted and learned from their experiences of the disaster.

(2) Countermeasures

Since each stakeholder also felt that the fading of the disaster was an issue, it was relatively easy to gain their cooperation. However, it was necessary to provide a place where people of different generations could discuss the disaster. We redefined Kamaishi Tsunami Memorial Hall as a place where the locals of any generation can discuss disaster prevention in the past and future to pass on their lessons in a relaxing atmosphere, which was formerly known as a museum for tourists.

We also interviewed many people from different standpoints about the disaster. We asked about what changed their behaviors, what they felt and learned from the disaster and from many other perspectives. For example, by listening to the thoughts of students, teachers, local fishery processors, and architects involved in the recovery efforts at the time, we were able to get a realistic view of the "disaster" and extract the essence of each person's thoughts.

Converting these ideas into training texts has allowed even those who had never actually experienced the disaster to pass them on. Thereby making it possible to pass on a culture of disaster prevention as a local community.

(3) Stakeholders who were particularly affected by the project

The solution to this issue has had the greatest impact on the local residents. As it has activated the transmission of information about the disaster, thereby preventing the memories of the disaster from fading away.

The revitalization of the disaster prevention culture has led to younger generations becoming interested in the traditions. For example, last year saw the birth of the youngest storyteller to pass down the tsunami traditions, who was 9 years old. It can be said that the activities have taken root in the local community and as a result, we have been able to build a sustainable tradition involving people who were not involved in the activities up to this point.

In the first place, young people and immigrants who had not experienced or did not remember the Great East Japan Earthquake were reluctant to talk about the disaster. However, the corporate training programs involving the local community have revitalized the community and made it easier for them to participate in activities to pass on disaster prevention.

In many cases, the companies that participate in our training also aspire to take part in fishery experience, which helps improve the earnings of the local fishermen. On the environmental

side, carbon offsets are provided to the Kamaishi Regional Forestry Association, which in turn generates revenue.

One of the unique features of this project is that the companies that participated in the training were attracted by the city and became our stakeholders. Those companies have tended to repeat the training. The three participating companies have donated a total of over 200 million yen to Kamaishi. This is designated for the further development of this project. The growth of the training program has also resulted in an increase in lodging, food, and beverage revenue in the city.

Achievements and Results

Direct and indirect results of the Good Practice.

The development of the training programs has led to inviting large corporations from outside the region to visit Kamaishi. The participation fees were used to pay for the personnel costs of the cultural heritage specialists. As a result, a sustainable cycle has been established whereby the culture of disaster prevention could be passed on to elementary and junior high schools in the region, to other local governments in Japan that requested it, and to foreign countries.

The beneficiaries include the community itself, which has established a path for cultural transmission, lodging businesses and restaurants that have seen an increase in overnight stays through building a new model, and primary industry personnel in charge of some of the training programs.

As a side result, there is now a possibility to sell blue carbon offsets derived from seaweed produced in Kamaishi to the training participating companies, with the cooperation of the fishermen.

In addition, three companies participating in the training program donated over 200 million yen for the operation of said program, which will be used in the future.

Corporate Training Achievements in 2022 (Forecast for 2023)

- (1) Number of training participating organizations: 35 (60)
 - (2) Number of participants: 284 (500)
 - (3) Training sales: 8.6 million yen (12 million yen)
 - (4) Average price per person: 30,280 yen/per person (32,000 yen/per person)
- Excluding school excursions and experience-based activities.

On a 5-point scale of "very satisfied," "satisfied" "neutral" "dissatisfied," and "very dissatisfied," 84.8% of participants rated our training programs as "very satisfied."

Tips for other destinations

Your suggestions or recommendations for other destinations facing the same issues or implementing similar solutions

In order to maintain culture and community, it is essential for people and organizations to support them, which of course incur expenses. Furthermore, in a region with a declining population, it is necessary to train people who will be responsible for them. It should be noted

that it is not enough for the local government to simply provide money; it is of paramount importance to realize the motivation and desire for recognition of the local people involved in those activities.

In the case of Kamaishi, as a means of resolving these issues, the DMO developed corporate training programs based on our "culture of disaster prevention". However, we believe that this can be applied to other regions as well, as each local community has its own unique culture.

On the other hand, since those programs are high-value-added, expert advice is needed on how to create and implement the plans. The local DMO, Kamaishi DMC, is providing such advice to other DMOs all over Japan.

Recognitions and Additional references

Recognitions and awards the Good Practice received and supporting evidence.

- 1) Examples of Corporate Training Promotion

<https://prt-times.jp/main/html/rd/p/000000058.000103401.html>

- 2) Travel to Learn From Nature and People (OTA)

<https://matcha-jp.com/jp/11691>

- 3) Birth of a 9-year-old Storyteller (Regional News)

<https://en-trance.jp/news/kamaishishinbun-news/34890.html>

- 4) Experiential Programs Involving the Fishing and Forestry Industries

<https://visitkamaishi.jp/program/>

- 5) Corporate Training (Nikkei Newspaper)

<https://hatarakikata.design/news/1267/>