

Module # 1 - Component # 1



Introduction / Philosophy of Game Lodge Management

Philosophy and Objectives of Running a Game Lodge

The **philosophy** of successful Game Lodge Management can be based on the following five principles:

1. To provide the best adventure safaris possible, **profitably**.
2. Tourism through the revenue brought into the country and jobs created, is one of the ways to **preserve** the fast dwindling wilderness areas in Southern Africa and makes it beneficial to the country as a whole.
3. All employees should obtain long-term **personal fulfilment** as well as future growth prospects within the company.
4. The company, its directors and employees should derive short, as well as long term financial benefits.
5. The Lodge must at all times maintain sound conservation principles.

Your **objectives** should be to ensure that standards on your safaris are well above any of your competitors. Your **long-term objective** is to build your Safari Company to become nationally and internationally recognized as one of the finest adventure companies on the market in that region. To do this your **short-term objectives** are to achieve the following:

1. Competitive advantage.
2. Quality and innovation.
3. Productivity.
4. Profitability.

General Statement of Intent

Your lodge should strive to be a “**low impact**” safari company that does not contribute to the degradation of the area. To achieve this, there are a few basic rules:

1. Guides must obey all park rules.
2. No harassing of animals.
3. No disturbing of breeding areas.
4. No burying of rubbish. All trash must be removed from campsites and handed over to the park disposal area or burnt and lodges must have adequate rubbish pits, all bottles and cans to be recycled.
5. When leaving a campsite, the area must be clean and fire ashes buried.
6. Burning of wood should be minimal.

Minimum Standards

Should your Lodge Company have more than one camp, you must have agreed standards for as many activities, services, equipment and materials as possible. You cannot leave as important a factor as **guest satisfaction** to chance, so set **performance standards** on different tasks, services and procedures. Your standards should be based on **guest requirements**, levels of service, accommodation and personal attention.

It is your responsibility to ensure that these standards are maintained, and provide regular feedback to your Concession Manager. This is necessary to monitor and adapt standards as guest requirements change.

Characteristics of a Lodge Manager

Unlike a hotel manager who is more of an administrator, a lodge manager is **constantly involved with their guests**. A manager must be able to educate and entertain his guests as well as run a professional operation.

The following are some characteristics to look for when employing someone for this position, or for individuals already in this position or striving for such a position.

1. Ability to confidently deal with and **communicate** with guests and staff from different backgrounds and cultures.
2. Love of lifestyle – you must love **living and working in the bush** and be driven by the love of the outdoors and not monetary funds. You must be able to handle the isolation of being cut off from comforts of modern town living.
3. Broad education either formal or informal – you should be **knowledgeable** in all topics including fauna and flora.
4. Ability to deal with staff i.e. leadership qualities. You must be able to **accept** and **delegate** responsibilities. **Motivate** your staff and be trusted and respected by them.
5. Organizational Skills – **Organize your office**, staff, time, workshop, catering, accommodation, maintenance and all other aspects of managing the lodge in a professional and profitable manner.
6. You must be **presentable** – neat, clean and pleasing to the eye.
7. Initiative – You must be able to handle all types of **emergencies** and **crises** calmly and efficiently and constantly **plan** ahead.
8. Self motivated – Be positive and have the **right attitude**, remain **motivated**, caring and level headed through all situations – this requires strong work ethic, loyalty and honesty.
9. You cannot afford to be moody or take personal problems to work.
10. Be prepared to work **long hours** – seven days a week.

11. People pleasing – You must enjoy working with and pleasing people and be outgoing.
12. Service orientated - You must know what guests want, what pleases them and disappoints them.

The Lodge Credo

Your lodge or lodge group should strive to provide the finest possible safaris in the Earth's wild places. Your company should be: *holistic, conservation-orientated, non-consumptive, caring and ethically driven.*

- Low volume, low impact, non-consumptive tourism is the finest way to create a sustainable engine for economic growth for the country, it's peoples, your staff and partners. Your activities must help stimulate these economies, so that all stakeholders help protect the environment and its wildlife.
- Everything you do as a travel and safari company must *add value*: to the countries in which you operate; to the environment; to the communities who live around the wild places where you operate; to the people who work for you; to your guests; to your partners; to your company.
- Put the environments in which you work above everything else. Your ethics should rely on you to say "no" to guests' requests if that request compromises your principles (i.e. is harmful to the environment, their safety or the safety of your employees).
- Recognise that one of your primary resources is your staff. They are, in every respect, the interface between your products, the environment, your guests and your clients.
- Believe that it is your responsibility to employ from, train and help uplift the communities in the areas where you are represented. Ensure the prospering of these rich cultures, the wildlife that surrounds them and the wild places they occupy. Aim to provide the framework to enable these communities to fully embrace their environmental and cultural heritages and become the custodians of the future.

- On your safaris and in your camps, you host, entertain and educate your guests, striving to give them holistic experiences that will produce new (or re-affirmed) conservationists and create guests for life. At the end of the safari, your guests should become the new ambassadors for your Lodge company and for Africa and take Africa's messages of hope and conservation around the globe.
- Hosting guests is your business and "hosting" them means making them feel at home. Create an atmosphere and an ambience in your camps that makes your guests feel as though they are in their hosts' home. Your employees have to enjoy interacting with guests and understand that your future depends on how well they look after your guests and how much they enjoy their stay with you.
- The safety of your guests and employees and their enjoyment of their travels with you are paramount. If you are not nurturing the environment, or looking after your guests, (or the people who support your people who do), then you may not be best suited for this business. Looking after people is what you do. If you don't like dealing with guests (or your customers – i.e. agents) then you don't have a long-term future in this industry.
- Always live by the principle of "under promising and over delivering" and always act in all your dealings with integrity!

If you are happy with these core values and guiding principles, you will find your life in the Lodge and Safari Industry rewarding, enriching, educational and fun!