



The Business of Guiding

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The Business of Guiding

A. Getting into the business.

You've taken the big step to get certified, now what? Or maybe you've been in the business for years and want to expand. Wherever you are in your guiding career, you quickly realize there are many layers to this business. Whether you want to be a guide and work for someone else or start your own business, you have a lot of decisions to make.

1. **Volunteer vs. Paid Guide:** When you are just starting out and IF you have the leisure to forego payment, volunteering is a great way to get in front of people and build your confidence for guiding. It can also help you make a lot of connections in the industry. This is a perfect way to start if you are nearing retirement or starting as an intern. Pick a place that interests you and say you want to "Volunteer." Most places will be happy to train you.
2. **Shadowing:** Many companies will require that you shadow experienced guides and may require you to conduct a tour before they hire you. Shadowing experienced guides is invaluable. Try to shadow different guides on the same tour. You will quickly pick-up different styles, techniques and stories.
3. **Continuing Education:** This is a business where you will always keep learning. APT provides monthly lectures, yearly training, and some local site tours. As a member, take advantage of these opportunities to expand your knowledge and network.
4. **Part-Time vs. Full Time:** When you are ready to jump in as a paid guide, you still have many decisions to make. Most guiding is seasonal, part-time. BUT some people can make guiding a full-time living. If you are starting a business, it may take years to develop a reputation for repeat business...there is a lot of competition out there, but with patience and perseverance, you can be very successful.

B. Owning a Business vs. Working for a Company

1. **Starting Your Own Business:** Many guides starting out get family and friends to take a tour and may assume bookings will just start coming in through their newly created website, pamphlets, social media, etc. That may be the case, but keep in mind, if you start a business, you are now a small business owner

and should take all the necessary steps to protect yourself and your business. Many if not most of these steps and expenses are listed below:

- a. Hire a lawyer to establish your business as an LLC (Limited Liability Corporation) and get an EIN (Employer Identification Number). This can be done inexpensively through LegalZoom.
- b. Hire a CPA to advise you and prepare your taxes. Many expenses incurred can be tax deductible, but it is best to get the advice of a professional. CPAs can save you a lot of money and are well worth their fee. Hire someone you feel comfortable with and who *understands* the guiding business.
- c. Hire a website developer/technical developer. Although many of us can create a simple website, a professional can optimize your website and help you “*rise to the top*” with search engines. They may also advise you of how best to use social media or tourist sites such as Trip Advisor.
- d. Create business cards and pamphlets. Many people will still ask you for your card. Be ready to offer a professionally designed card that reflects your “*brand*.”
- e. Decide what tools you will need/use to create your schedules, such as Google Calendar, Excel Spreadsheets, etc. and become familiar with their uses.
- f. Decide on your rates. There is no industry standard and hourly rates can be very different from one company to another. Generally, guides are paid by the hour. Flat rates are usually established for a “Meet and Greet,” such as an airport pick-up, and for an overnight tour.
- g. Decide on how and when you will pay yourself and your guides. This also varies widely in the industry. Your bank of choice can help you with this decision.
- h. Design a contract so that any guides you hire have a clear understanding of your rules and expectations.

SEE ATTACHMENT A- Sample Contract

- i. Decide on whether you will hire employees for your company (requiring a W-2) or you will hire contractors (requiring a 1099). Again, depending on the size of your business, your CPA and/or legal team can advise you. You will need to request a W-9 from any employee that you pay more than \$600 per year.
2. Working for a Company: There are numerous companies that hire guides. You should first check the APT website for corporate sponsors and reach out to them since they understand the work that you have put in to get your Philadelphia certification. Realize there is a season for hiring, generally late

Winter. Once Spring starts, companies are in peak season and may be unable to interview you.

3. **WHAT EVERYONE NEEDS TO KNOW:** Whether you work for a company(s) or have your own business, everyone in the guiding business should have:
 - a. A separate bank account; do not intermix your household accounts or other businesses with your guiding income and expenses. If you open a *business account*, banks will require an EIN. You do not have to be an LLC to get an EIN. There is a box for sole proprietorship in the EIN application. If you do not get an EIN, you can simply open a separate savings/checking account in your name.
 - b. A dedicated credit card for your business expenses.
 - c. Complete and accurate records of all expenses, including home office size, internet costs, phone costs, continuing education costs and anything that can be related to “industry observation” such as trying out a new restaurant or taking a trip/tour that will help with your business. *Consult with your CPA.*
 - d. Complete and accurate records of all income, including tours that may not require a 1099 (under \$600), cash tours, and tips (they are reportable income too). *Consult with your CPA.*
 - e. A contract. Whether hiring others or working for a company, a contract bulletproofs your decision to maintain a 1099 status. It should be specific enough to lay out duties but vague enough to maintain the individualism that is so valuable to the craft we provide.

REFER TO ATTACHMENT A

- f. Liability Insurance. APT members can get this insurance at a very reasonable rate through the National Federation of Tourist Guides (NFTGA). Refer to the APT website.

C. Where Do You Fit in the Guiding Industry?

There are numerous types of Guides. Some require special skill sets such as knowing a foreign language, having driving skills for a bus or a horse and carriage, or understanding special needs such as accessibility tours given for the blind, hearing impaired or the disabled. Descriptions of various terms used in the industry are listed below:

1. Tour Guide: A person qualified (certified) to conduct tours of specific locations or attractions.

2. **Tour Director:** Also called tour manager, tour conductor and tour escort. A person who manages an itinerary on behalf of the tour operator, ensuring the program is carried out as described in the tour operator's literature and sold to the traveler/consumer and who gives practical information.
3. **Tour Operator:** Develops, markets and operates group travel programs that provide a complete travel experience for one price and includes transportation, accommodations, sightseeing, selected meals and an escort. Tour operators market directly to the consumer through travel agents, and are beginning to be listed on computerized reservation systems.
4. **Driver-guide:** A tour guide who does double duty by driving a vehicle while narrating.
5. **Group Leader/Course Leader:** An individual who has been given the responsibility of coordinating tour and travel arrangements for a group. The group leader may act as a liaison to a tour operator and may develop a tour independently.
6. **Meet and Greet:** A pre-purchased service for meeting and greeting clients upon arrival in a city, usually at an airport, pier, or rail station, and assisting clients with entrance formalities, collecting baggage, and obtaining transportation.
7. **Step-on Guide:** A tour guide who boards a motor coach to give detailed, expert commentary about the city or area being visited.
8. **Docents:** Guides that provide specific knowledge of a historic house, museum or gallery.

D. The Guide's Daily Pack:

It is essential to have everything with you that you need for the tour. Guiding can be physically demanding, especially walking tours and long tours. Always wear shoes that provide proper support and have a hat and/or sunscreen. Having a name-tag helps identify you to the group; and wear your APT pin! Besides your wallet and id, listed below are a few important items you should carry:

1. A refillable water bottle
2. Cell phone
3. Umbrella and/or a cheap poncho (carrying a few extra for the group on a rainy day can make a real difference)
4. The itinerary, including bus company name, and cell phone numbers of all involved such as: tour company, leaders, bus company and bus drivers
5. A pen
6. Basic first aid such as Band-Aide bandages tissues, alcohol wipes
7. Any medications you may take or need
8. High energy snack

E. What Every Guide Should Know:

1. First and foremost, a guide needs to be hired! A lot of hiring in this business is based on reputation and recommendations so always try to do your best. You never know who is watching! Some jobs do not have well defined qualifications. If you have any doubts about accepting a job, ask a lot of questions so you fully understand your role.
2. Try to avoid peak season to be interviewed (Spring/Summer) and follow commonsense interview procedures such as being punctual and dressing appropriately.
3. Tour managers should provide you with a detailed itinerary and answer any questions you have. Make sure you get important information such as flight information, pick-up/meet location, phone numbers for bus drivers and escorts, and the bus company name. You may need to communicate often with each other as tours can change itineraries up to the last minute. Part of booking a tour includes understanding how a company books jobs, i.e. via email, spreadsheets, google, etc., and how, when and how much you will be paid. Ask if you need to submit a W-9 for payment which is required for any payments over \$600/year. This is when a contract on either end can be helpful in clarifying any and all details. (See Attachment A) The example attachments below will also aid you in your bookings.

SEE ATTACHMENT B -BOOKING CHECKLIST
SEE ATTACHMENT C -SAMPLE INVOICE

PLEASE NOTE: SCAMS have become prevalent throughout our industry. Be cautious when booking from an email request. Try to speak with someone on the phone if you have any doubts and **NEVER EVER** accept or deposit an overpayment for a tour.

F. Preparing For The Tour

1. Familiarize yourself with your incoming group if possible. Research their school, city, organization etc., to give yourself some insight into their background. Make sure to get contact information, i.e. cell phone numbers of group leaders. Also check to see if there are any special needs such as handicapped passengers.
2. Be sure you know the drop-off location, (this is generally the National Constitution Center bus lot for bus groups), and communicate pick-up locations and times with group leaders and bus drivers **BEFORE** they depart the bus lot.
3. If a bus is late, you are **NOT** required to add on time for them. Usually, guides are contracted by the hour for a particular time, e.g. 10am-2pm. If they are late, or a no show, you should be paid for the 4 hours, still ending at 2pm.

4. Tour logistics is all about *Timing and Flexibility*. Have a prepared itinerary but be flexible to alter that.
5. Know your sites, site fees, site hours, and security check points. If a site requests a donation, such as Christ Church, communicate that with the group leader and enter the site only if the group is prepared to make the requested donation.
6. Every guide needs to know restroom locations. There are outside restrooms for the busses that pull in at the National Constitution Center and the Visitor Center provides the main restroom location, especially for large groups. But be aware of other locations throughout your tour route in case the need arises. If you have an evening tour, learn where there are facilities for afterhours.
7. Many times you will be responsible for suggesting restaurant choices, and shopping options so be sure you are familiar with those that can accommodate large groups and call ahead if possible.
8. Check ahead for any roadwork sites, detours, or events that would affect the tour route. Certain city *Apps* or radio traffic reports can help to know street closures and traffic conditions.
9. Be prepared for inclement weather by planning a route that includes inside site options.
10. Keep your group safe. Insist that they cross at cross walks and with green lights only and point out uneven pavements. For bus tours, make sure they remain seated while the bus is in motion and exit the bus only at a safe unloading space. On very hot days, make sure they take enough rest breaks and stay hydrated. In the event of an emergency, stay calm and use common sense. Do not try to offer anything more than basic first aid, unless you are CPR certified. Call 911 immediately for a medical emergency.

SEE ATTACHMENT D -SAMPLE MEDICAL REPORT

G. Miscellaneous Reminders:

1. Always be professional and wear proper attire. Remember you only get one first impression.
2. Take special care if your tour includes anything on controversial subjects, e.g., politics, religion, monuments, etc.
3. Promote Philadelphia. Avoid negativity. A good experience for your group may mean a return trip or a recommendation.
4. Always remember it is THEIR DAY...they paid for your services. Guiding can be a subtle balance of understanding your clients' interests and showcasing your talents. Be in tune to their body language, comments and questions and always try to accommodate their requests first.
5. Your tour groups are on vacation so have fun! Show them your enthusiasm and passion for our World Class City!!

AGREEMENT FOR GUIDE SERVICE

Guides Letterhead

(Name, Address, Phone, Email)

Date:

Company/Contact:

Guide Services Requested:

Date(s)/Time(s): Hours

Contracted per Day/Hour:

Total Fee for Services:

Cancellation Policy:

If (company) must cancel the tour under agreement with (guide) within (number) week(s) of the scheduled tour, (company) will pay (percentage) of the contracted amount. If (company) cancels the tour within (week, day(s), or hour(s)) of the scheduled tour, (company) will pay the full amount of the contracted services. If (guide) is unable to conduct the tour, it will be (his/her) responsibility to find a comparable replacement for the job. (Company) is to be notified at once of any changes.

Please sign and return a copy of this agreement by (date).

(Guide signature)

(Date)

Accepted:

(Company)

(Date)

ATTACHMENT A
BOOKING A JOB (Checklist)

1. Booking Date
2. Tour Company/booking agent/client
3. Address, phone, email, contact
4. Fee Structure
(4 hr minimum, additional hourly fee, night rate, etc.)
5. Payment Method (Check, direct deposit) When will I be paid?
6. Compensation/Reimbursement Policy (Meals, Admission Fees, etc)
7. Cancellation Policy
8. Tour Dates/Times
9. Pick-up location
10. End-point or tour drop off location
11. Group Name/Tour Director
12. Number in Group
13. Group Type (Age, Nationality, Special Needs)
14. Bus Company Name, Phone #
15. Bus Driver Name, Cell #
16. Dress/Attire Requirements
17. Itinerary: Appointments, Donations, Reservations, Vouchers
18. Confirmed Final Itinerary to be received by (Date)

ATTACHMENT B

INVOICE FOR SERVICES *Guides Letterhead* *(Name, Address, Phone, Email)*

The purpose of the invoice is to provide written confirmation of services provided and fees due between guide and booking agent. The invoice should include the following:

1. Today's Date
2. Company Contact
3. Name of Guide
4. Client/Group Name/Booking Number
5. Tour Date(s): Time(s) Number of Hours/Days
6. Additional Reimbursable Fees
7. Total Due
8. To whom payment is made payable, address or banking information, payment due by....

ATTACHMENT C

MEDICAL EMERGENCY/ACCIDENT REPORT

Guide Name:

Name of Tour Company/Local Tour Director:

Date:

Time of Accident/Incident:

Time 911 Called:

Precise Location:

Name of Person Injured or ill, Address, Cell #, hotel, etc.:

Description of Emergency:

Weather, Traffic Conditions or Other Pertinent Information:

Name of Ambulance and Hospital:

Arrival Time of Ambulance:

Name(s) of Those accompanying Individual (to hospital):

Name(s) and Phone #(s) of Witness(es):

Description of Individual's Response to Medical Care:

If Care is Refused, Obtain Signature of Individual and Escort/Witness:

I have refused medical assistance.

Signed: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Additional Information or Observations:

ATTACHMENT D



About the Author...

Judith Smith (Judy) is a lifetime resident of the Philadelphia area. She received her BA in English from Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA and spent her entire 32-year career as a Management Analyst for the Department of Defense in Philadelphia. As an Analyst, she identified process improvements needed within various organizations, and as result, wrote numerous pamphlets, manuals, and guidance documents. She also taught information systems that she helped implement throughout her agency.

Since retiring in 2014, Judy has worked as a tour guide in Philadelphia. She has served on the Executive Board for the Association of Philadelphia Tour Guides (APT) since 2015.