

ZOO INTERVIEW Transcript

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WHAT IS YOUR POSITION AT THE MELBOURNE ZOO?

I've been lucky enough to be working for Zoos Victoria for almost five years now and I think I have one of the best jobs here. My job is all about creating revenue for Zoos Victoria to be able to do all the conservation work that we are all about. So my team looks after partnerships and that includes tourism as one of our key portfolios.

WHAT GEOGRAPHY SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE DO YOU CONTINUE TO USE IN YOUR ROLE?

So I think being on top of trends and data is really important in any business development role but especially in tourism of course, so you need to be on top of trends in tourism across the world. So who are our key competitors, so obviously within Australia that includes wildlife parks within Queensland and New South Wales especially but then where else what are the key audiences that we are wanting to attract going. So it is not only us but also we are competing with America Europe and South East Asia. So you need to be across those trends. And I guess that some of those skills you certainly learn in VCE and learn at university as well. But then digging deeper into that, it is about how to find that data and how to use it. So I think that that is a real important skill to try and develop. So for us, how we do that, is that we collect data through our admission teams. They ask every visitor where they are visiting from or what their post code is. We collect that and then my team actually analyze that data. So we pull reports to have a look at where the majority of our visitors are coming from and then we compare that with where our visitors are coming from to Victoria and to Australia. Then we can see where the gaps are. As an example at the moment, we know that India is a huge growth market into Australia and into Victoria. I think it's growing over 50% year on year, which is an incredible amount. However Zoos Victoria is not seeing a lot of that visitation. So my team's job is to say in the next 2 years how do we change that and look at making India a really big visitation market for our zoos.

WHAT POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF TOURISM HAVE YOU OBSERVED?

I'd love to say that everything is positive with tourism and it is an amazing industry to work in, you get some pretty cool perks but to be honest there are some negatives associated with international visitation as well. So I guess from a positive side of things what we have seen since I have been here is a huge increase in visitation numbers from the international markets well ahead of industry trends. So we kind of sit at about a 30 to 40% increase year on year in international visitation compared to a Victorian or Australian average of maybe, for eastern markets, 7% or western markets, maybe 2%. So it's really exciting to see that we are ahead of the trend in our visitation and that also means more money which means more conservation work, which is fantastic. From a negative perspective, a few of the challenges we have had is

because of that shift to eastern markets we now face language barriers. So again, you kind of look at how do we change that, how do we make that into a positive and the team has done some great work looking at simplified, Chinese is probably the biggest language barrier. So we have created brochures, maps, videos, and even social media channels and websites specifically for that market. Because one of the things we find is that as Australians we understand conservation and the concept of conservation and caring for Australian wildlife, whereas some of our friends visiting from international countries, that is not something that they would learn in school. So our job here is to hopefully, have a positive impact of change on that and some of the ways we are doing that is through interpretation. So again, educating those visitors and trying to teach them about how they can actually help us rather than necessarily coming in and touching an animal that does not want to be touched. So it's about us creating ways to make that a positive experience rather than always just being a negative.

