

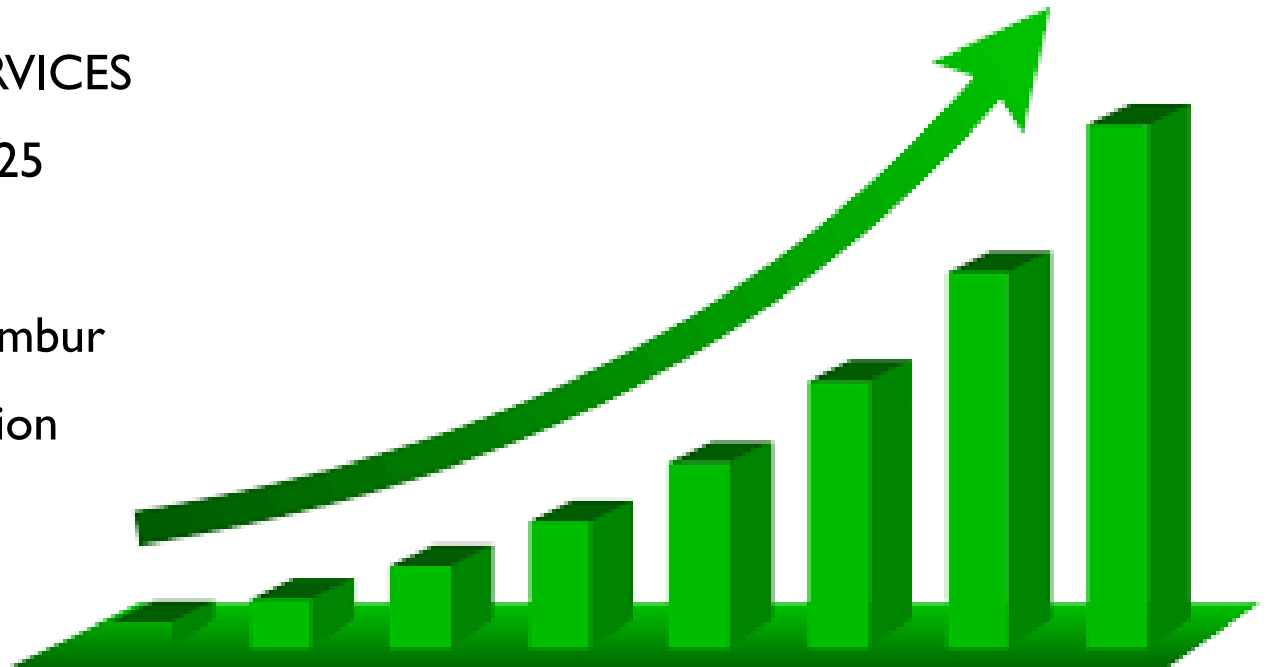
# FACILITATED DISCUSSION AND CASE EXAMPLES: WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES FOR SCALING UP?

TOURISM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

INNOCAMP IN ALAND, JAN 2025

Raili Mengel, Katrin Papp, Reve Lambur

Estonian Rural Tourism Organisation



The Workshop is Delivered by the Estonian Rural Tourism Organisation.  
The photo shows a small part of the organisation members, sending greetings to Innocamp participants, as ERTO marks its 25 Years of Activity this year!



---

***If someone asked you honestly: why has your tourism business not scaled up or taken the next development leap yet — what would your answer be?***

# KEY CHALLENGES SO FAR

What kind of challenges best describe your situation?

---

## Market & Customers

- Strong seasonality or unstable demand
- Target market too narrow or dependent on one customer segment
- Customers value the experience but are not willing to pay enough
- High dependency on international markets or external factors
- ...

# KEY CHALLENGES SO FAR

What kind of challenges best describe your situation?

---

## Product & Offering

- Product depends heavily on my personal presence
- Difficult to standardize or repeat the offering
- Growth feels in conflict with authenticity or small-scale quality
- Current product cannot grow without change
- ...



# KEY CHALLENGES SO FAR

What kind of challenges best describe your situation?

---

## Resources & Workforce

- Lack of skilled or motivated workforce
- I am a bottleneck in daily operations or decisions
- Missing key skills (sales, marketing, finance, leadership, tech)
- Limited time, energy, or risk of burnout
- ...

# KEY CHALLENGES SO FAR

What kind of challenges best describe your situation?

---

## Sales & Marketing

- Too dependent on one sales channel or intermediary
- Weak direct sales or international visibility
- Strong story, but difficulty reaching the right audiences
- Marketing is irregular or non-strategic
- ...

# KEY CHALLENGES SO FAR

What kind of challenges best describe your situation?

---

## Financial & Risk-Related Issues

- Fear of financial risk or investment
- Cash flow limits hiring or development
- Project funding distracts from long-term growth
- Growth feels financially or personally too risky
- ...

# KEY CHALLENGES SO FAR

What kind of challenges best describe your situation?

---

## Operating Environment & Regulation

- Permits, safety rules, or regulations slow development
- Environmental or land-use restrictions
- Location or transport accessibility challenges
- Limited local support or community acceptance
- ...

---

**What kind of support or change  
would help you move forward?**

# PRACTICAL SCALE-UP PRINCIPLES (I)

---

## ➔ Start with the Business Model – Not with Volume

Before increasing capacity or sales, clarify:

- *Who is your real customer?*
- *What value do you create for them?*
- *Which part of your business would break if demand increased?*

**Tip:** Use a simple Business Model Canvas to check **desirability, feasibility, and viability** before growing.

## ➔ Move from Product to Experience

The biggest scale up often happens when:

- a product or service becomes a **story-based experience**
- the same resource creates **more value per customer**

# PRACTICAL SCALE-UP PRINCIPLES (II)

---



## **Collaborate to Scale**

Many tourism businesses scale more effectively **together**:

- joint packages, routes, or themes
- shared marketing and visibility
- cross-referrals

**Key insight:** Collaboration is a scale-up strategy — not a weakness.

# SCALE UP CASE STUDY EXAMPLE

## Collaborative Scale-up (Growing Together)

---

### Starting point:

A small company cannot scale alone due to limited resources or visibility.

### Scale up:

- 3–5 companies create a **joint package, route, or themed experience**
- Shared story or brand, separate services
- Joint marketing and sales efforts

### Outcome:

- Greater visibility without overloading individual businesses
- Longer stays for visitors
- Stronger regional identity

# PRACTICAL SCALE-UP PRINCIPLES (III)

---



## **Recognize the Entrepreneur as a Bottleneck**

Common growth barriers:

- lack of time and energy
- too many roles on one person
- difficulty letting go

## **Scale-up often requires:**

- role changes
- delegation
- building a System Around the Experience – Not Doing Everything Yourself

# SCALE UP CASE STUDY EXAMPLE

## From Founder-Led Service to a Systemised Experience

---

### Starting point:

The entrepreneur personally delivers all tours or experiences. Quality is high, but capacity is limited (e.g. guided visits).

### Scale up:

- The experience is clearly structured and described step by step.
- Visit guides are trained to deliver the same experience
- The founder's role shifts from delivery to **quality and experience management**

### Outcome:

- Higher capacity without losing quality
- Reduced dependency on one person
- More sustainable business model



# PRACTICAL SCALE-UP PRINCIPLES (IV)

---



## Reduce Seasonality Through New Meanings, Not More Volume

Low season is not solved by copying high-season products.

**Instead:**

- create **off-season reasons to visit** (learning, wellbeing, indoor activities, B2B)
- target audiences who value calm, depth, and quality

# SCALE UP CASE STUDY EXAMPLE

## Reducing Seasonality Through Thematic Products

---


### Starting point:

Business is concentrated in a short high season.

### Scale up:

- Creation of off-season thematic offers (e.g. silence, darkness, slow time, wellbeing)
- Active communication of the value of the low season
- Targeting niche segments that seek calm and space

### Outcome:

- Longer operating season
  - More stable income
  - Less dependency on weather and peak periods
- 

# SCALE UP CASE STUDY EXAMPLE

## From One Product to a Product Portfolio

---


### Starting point:

One strong, often seasonal tourism product (e.g. kayaking tour).

### Scale up:

- Create variations of the same concept:
  - short version
  - premium version
  - off-season version (e.g. for spring and autumn)
- Different products for different target groups (B2C, B2B, small groups)

### Outcome:

- Reduced seasonality
  - Higher average customer value
  - More predictable sales
- 

# SCALE UP CASE STUDY EXAMPLE

## From Local Experience to a Clear International Niche

---

### Starting point:

A well-rated local product with mostly random demand.

### Scale up:

- Clear niche positioning (e.g. wellbeing travellers, slow travel, corporate retreats)
- Clear value proposition in English
- 1–2 selected international sales channels instead of “being everywhere”

### Outcome:

- Fewer but higher-value customers
- Better pricing power
- More stable demand

# SCALE UP CASE STUDY EXAMPLE

## Digital Scale-up (Without Increasing Physical Capacity)

---


### Starting point:

The experience is high quality, but sales and communication are handled manually or only on site.

### Scale up:

- Online booking and automated confirmation system
- Digital pre-arrival information and post-experience follow-up
- Partial digitalisation of the service journey (e.g. preparation phase)

### Outcome:

- Less manual work and fewer emails
  - Improved customer experience
  - More time for core activities
- 

# SCALE UP CASE STUDY EXAMPLE

## B2B-Oriented Scale-up

---


### **Starting point:**

The business mainly serves individual travellers or small consumer groups.

### **Scale up:**

- Development of offers for companies (team retreats, leadership programmes, creative work)
- Repeat (loyal) customers and structured packages
- Clear pricing

### **Outcome:**

- Higher purchasing power per customer
  - More predictable demand
  - Reduced seasonality
- 

# SCALE UP CASE STUDY EXAMPLE

## Sustainability as a Growth Driver

---


### Starting point:

Sustainability practices exist but are not clearly communicated or monetised.

### Scale up:

- Clear sustainability promise and measurable actions
- Certifications or recognised standards
- Targeted communication to markets where sustainability influences purchasing decisions

### Outcome:

- Stronger differentiation
  - Higher willingness to pay
  - Better-matched customer profiles
- 

# PRACTICAL SCALE-UP PRINCIPLES (V)

---



## **Storytelling and Learning Justify Higher Prices**

Visitors are willing to pay more when they:

- understand the story behind the place
- learn something meaningful
- feel emotionally connected

### **Remember:**

People do not only buy services — they buy **meaning and memory**.



## **Scale Up Step by Step (Test Before You Grow)**

You do not need to be perfect to start.

- Test new ideas with small groups
- Learn from feedback
- Improve gradually

**Guiding question:** *What is the smallest version of your next development step that you could realistically test?*

---

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR FEEDBACK  
AND THINKING ALONG WITH US!**

# APPENDIX I – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

## Worksheet for independent work prior to discussion

### Key Challenges So Far

Tick or note the challenges that best describe your situation. Add comments if useful.

#### 1. Market & Customers

- Strong seasonality or unstable demand
- Target market too narrow or dependent on one customer segment
- Customers value the experience but are not willing to pay enough
- High dependency on international markets or external factors

Notes:

---

---

#### 2. Product & Offering

- Product depends heavily on my personal presence
- Difficult to standardize or repeat the offering
- Growth feels in conflict with authenticity or small-scale quality
- Current product cannot grow without change

Notes:

---

---

#### 3. Resources & Workforce

- Lack of skilled or motivated workforce
- I am a bottleneck in daily operations or decisions
- Missing key skills (sales, marketing, finance, leadership, tech)
- Limited time, energy, or risk of burnout

Notes:

---

---

#### 4. Sales & Marketing

- Too dependent on one sales channel or intermediary
- Weak direct sales or international visibility
- Strong story, but difficulty reaching the right audiences
- Marketing is irregular or non-strategic

Notes:

---

---

#### 5. Financial & Risk-Related Issues

- Fear of financial risk or investment
- Cash flow limits hiring or development
- Project funding distracts from long-term growth
- Growth feels financially or personally too risky

Notes:

---

---

#### 6. Operating Environment & Regulation

- Permits, safety rules, or regulations slow development
- Environmental or land-use restrictions
- Location or transport accessibility challenges
- Limited local support or community acceptance

Notes:

---

---

#### Reflection

What is currently the *main* challenge preventing your next development step?

---

---

What kind of support or change would help you move forward?

---

---

## APPENDIX II – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### Inspiration and Reference Materials for Entrepreneurs from other Cross-Border Cooperation Projects

---

- **Project BASCIL** <https://interreg-baltic.eu/project/bascil/> (under Outputs)
  - *Handbooks „Practical Solutions For Designing Culinary Tourism Services Provided By Local Food Producers In Baltic Sea Region“*
  - *Handbooks „Marketing and Promotion of Common Regional Culinary Tourism Products“*
- **Project Light in the Dark** <https://interreg-baltic.eu/project/light-in-the-dark/> (under Solutions - Outputs)
  - *Handbook „Off-Season: A Gateway to New Business Opportunities“*
  - *Example of a Tourism Product/Service Card*  
(Next slides: No. 1–2 Guiding Question Templates for Creating a Product Card; No. 3 Sample Product Card Template)

# Light in the Dark product card

## Product description

Product name:

Short description:

Availability:

Duration:

## Details

Group size or max capacity:

Program / timetable:

Physical place / route:

Level of difficulty / restrictions concerning weather or disability:

Required equipment that the customer needs to know:

Accommodation and level of standard:

Other details:

## Pricing

Price:

Seasonal or group price differentiation:

Is sales commission taken into account ie. through DMCs?

What does the price include?

Possible extra services and their costs:

Payment specification / sales channels:

## Destination and marketing

Is the product aligned with the marketing strategy of the destination / nationally?

What marketing channels will be used?

What are the destination's Unique Selling Points?

Why does the customer choose your destination?

## Internal elements

What is there to sense, learn and experience in the product / destination?

What feelings / emotions does the product arise in the customer?

Is there a strong story behind the product?

What sensory elements does the product contain?

## Quality

Operating procedures, technical requirements, customer management.

What quality improvement is needed in the product?

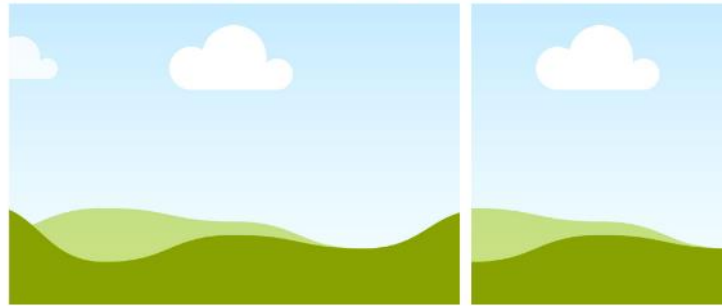
Are there safety risks and how are they addressed in the product?

Does the product conform to sustainable tourism?

Does the product fulfil your country's national visit organisation's international criteria?

## Other

Other relevant information:



**An interesting headline**  
**A selling underline that makes the reader want to know more**

Change the photoes to some really appealing ones that makes the potential customer to want to experience that.  
You ´ll do it by select the photo, right-click and choose change image from the drop-down list  
In the box with the anchors you put your company logo, the same way as above

**Activity facts:**  
**Duration:** time in hours tha activity takes  
**Location:** Where in the world is this taking place, city, train/bus station, port, etc  
**Season:**  
**No.of participants:** Minimum and maximum  
**Level of activity/previous knowledge required:**  
**What to bring:** Special clothing or something else like binoculars etc  
**Whats included in the experience:** Specify what is included  
**Price:** xxxx Euro / person incl VAT

Why this is an event not to be missed

---

Feelings the experience evokes

---

Convenience of the experience

---

Activities included in the experience

COMPANY NAME

Contact person

Phone:

Mail:

www.xxxx.

