

BUSINESS and TOURISM at DRUSILLAS PARK

The Background

Drusillas Park is a family run business founded in 1925, when the late Captain Ann bought a derelict farm and 20 acres of land and opened the cottage to sell teas to passing motorists. He named the tea rooms after his first wife Drusilla, adding attractions and animals to help boost trade.

Drusillas remained in the Ann family until 1997 when it was acquired by current owners Laurence and Christine Smith, after selling a nationwide recruitment business. Recently Laurence and Christine have started to take a 'back seat' in the running of the company, with children Cassie and Ollie becoming Managing Directors. The Smiths have invested heavily in the Park and Drusillas welcomes around 350,000 visitors annually. The company is constantly evolving and improving and each year it introduces new animals and attractions in a concerted effort to add value and keep ahead of the competition.

"To run and develop a visitor attraction today you need a combination of regular investment, original marketing, sound financial information and high calibre people. Add to that some long term management planning and an efficient day to day operation and, provided the overall formula is right, success should follow."

Laurence Smith - Chairman

"Our mission is to create an outstanding zoo and visitor attraction which excites and educates children about animals and their environment, and which also provides them with a fun day out in safe and secure surroundings."



Managing Directors - Cassie Poland and Ollie Smith

The Market

Drusillas target audience is predominantly children under the age of 11 and their families. Drusillas focuses on the regional and domestic market; most customers travel to us from within 1½ hr drivetime radius. Competition is not restricted simply to other visitor attractions - Drusillas has to compete with the cinema, bowling alleys, swimming pools, the coast, local parks and even shopping centres!



Functional Areas

Drusillas Park is more than a zoo!

The management team of Directors and Managers oversee the following departments:

**Operations, HR, Zoo & Education,
Finance, Estate, Catering, Retail & Marketing.**

Company Structure

Drusillas has a functional structure with a tight-knit management team of Directors and Managers. The management team meet every Monday morning for an hour and once a month for a more formal management meeting, from which minutes are distributed and briefing notes provided to all staff members. Each department has its own hierarchy with responsibility delegated to a range of managers, deputy managers and supervisors.



Recruitment and Working at Drusillas

- Drusillas has approximately 50 permanent staff and a pool of 120 casual staff, as well as about 100 volunteers. Permanent staff are recruited as and when required; casual staff are largely recruited in January but also throughout the year as needed.
- Drusillas mostly uses in-house advertising and its own website for recruitment, but sometimes uses BIAZA (British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums) and an agency for permanent staff.
- Permanent staff usually have a first interview with a manager and second interview with a Director, whilst casual staff often have group interviews and one to one questions.
- Skills that are looked for include a positive attitude and good personality, as well as relevant experience (dependent on the role).
- Drusillas is open 10 – 6 so these are the main working hours, however keepers and maintenance staff start before 8am. There are most visitors at weekends and holidays, so the greatest number of staff are required then.



Staff and Customer Interaction

Drusillas staff and customers interact in many different ways, whether serving in our shops and restaurants, providing assistance in play areas, or responding to emails, letters and social media enquiries.

Meeting Customer's Needs

Visitor attractions initially need to meet customers' basic needs, for example a secure car park, safe and secure site, toilets and first aid facilities. We have many different types of customers at Drusillas and we strive to meet their needs. Children under 12 have a large play area, low level viewing on enclosures and lots of interactives. We have low level toilets, urinals and hand washing facilities, as well as baby change rooms and facilities. Members have their own entrance gate, groups can book in advance, we are fully wheelchair accessible and provide special parking spaces for our disabled visitors.



Low level viewing



Customer Service Priorities

An important part of customer service training at Drusillas are the seven priorities which staff are asked to commit to:

- **Appearance**
- **Name Badges**
- **Punctuality**
- **Visitor Interaction**
- **Staying Focused**
- **Breaks**
- **Maintaining High Standards**



Large play area for children under 12 years

Re-branding Drusillas

The re-branding of Drusillas in 1997 started with a new logo and corporate image and this is now well established and widely recognised.

The use throughout the Park, of a consistent corporate style that is strictly adhered to, creates a professional and contemporary image, but one that is also colourful and very child friendly.



Logo 1970s



Logo 1980s



Logo 1990s



Logo since 1997

Marketing

- **Website** - Drusillas website www.drusillas.co.uk is a major marketing tool and it has been updated several times in recent years to enable a greater range of online bookings. Today approximately 75% of daily admission tickets are bought online, as can memberships, Keeper for the Day, and Close Encounter experiences. We have a Customer Relationship Management System and use Google Analytics to discover how customers access the website and which pages they visit.
- **Social media** - Drusillas engages with its visitors through Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube, and monitors review websites such as Trip Advisor. At the time of printing, Drusillas had 70,000 followers on Facebook.
- **Google advertising** - We strive for search engine optimisation to be near the top of online searches, but some advertising is also required. As well as general brand marketing we use Google remarketing and look-alike audience services.
- **PR** is very important and we regularly feature in the press, on local radio, Meridian and BBC South East Today. All our PR is handled 'in-house'.
- **Bloggers and influencers** - A newer marketing method for us; we work with a variety of bloggers and influencers, but especially mummy bloggers. We have increased photo opportunities around the Park, partly with the aim of letting our customers do the marketing for us.
- **Leaflet distribution** has drastically reduced in recent years in favour of online marketing; we are still involved with Sussex Top Attractions, however.
- **Advertising and competitions** takes place in local newspapers, magazines and publications and online.
- **Promotions** - Joint ventures with Tesco, Brighton Sea Life Centre and the Grand Hotel, Eastbourne have been successful.
- **Strategic events** - we have reduced the number of costume character days at Drusillas, but held very successful Bluey and Bingo, and JJ of CoComelon visits recently. We have also increased our Halloween and Christmas offering in a bid to attract 'out of season' customers.
- **Newsletter sign ups** - customers can sign up for email offers via our website.



Investment and Development

Drusillas is constantly evolving and every year we have a major new feature so there is always something new for our visitors to see.

Key areas of importance

Many large organisations that have developed customer service strategies talk about demonstrating trust between the company and the customers and ensuring their customers feel valued. They enthuse about brilliant guest service, brand loyalty, creating heroes and delighting guests. At Drusillas, we don't disagree with any of the sentiments, but we are a little more down to earth!

Most visitor attractions have vulnerable areas when it comes to customer service and at Drusillas we pay particular attention to the following:

- Reducing queues at the entrance.
- Friendly approachable staff - but not in the 'have a nice day' mould!
- Well informed staff.
- Clean toilets checked regularly and litter collected.
- Punctual train rides.
- Accurate signage.
- Good quality food and quick service.
- Quick table clearing.
- Anything electrical or mechanical works as intended.
- Child safety and security.
- Efficient transactions in shops and restaurants.
- Fast response to radio requests - e.g. First Aider.



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Merchandising and Promotions

Approximately 40% of Drusillas turnover is derived from sales other than the zoo entrance ticket:

- **Our five catering outlets** generate over £1million towards Drusillas total turnover.

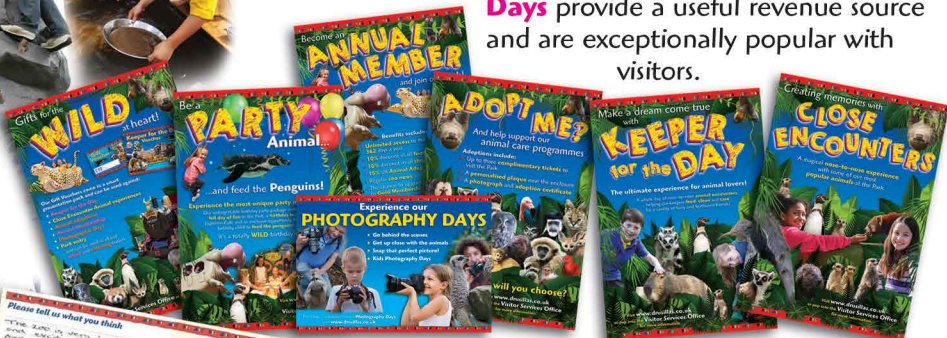


- **Retail** - Our three shops contribute valuable revenue - generating over £500,000.



- **Secondary leisure spend** has increased significantly in recent years and includes face painting, Penguin Plunge, Panning for Gold, Shooting Gallery, Vertical Limit (climbing wall), Spark and Santa.

- **Keeper for the Day, Close Encounter Animal Experiences, Animal Adoptions and Photography Days** provide a useful revenue source and are exceptionally popular with visitors.



Market Research and Feedback

Customer feedback is important for us to assess our customer service through letters, emails, Comment Cards and Mystery Shoppers.

