



MARKETING COMMITTEE

January 18, 2012, 3:00 PM

Sarasota Visitor Information Center

Minutes

In attendance: Mindy Pieper, Chair; Perla Pando; Pam Fendt; Janet Hansen; Rob Ferguson; Mary Kay Ryan; Laurie Pike; Grayson Schrantz; Morgan Gerhart; Nancy Taussig; Gordon Greenfield; Donna Carden; Stacy Alexander; Anne Goyer; Kevin Cooper.

Excused absences: Beth Owen Cipielewski; Brittany Norwood.

Unexcused absences: Steven Seidensticker; John Fischer.

SCVB staff in attendance: Anne Zavorskas; Erin Duggan; Bernadette Gottschalk; Alex Stevens; Janis Holland. Vendor atLarge attendees: Danny Watts; Steven Ashford; Alison Yarjan.

Chair Mindy Pieper called the meeting to order, noting there is a full agenda and tight schedule. She reminded the attendees that the SCVB voluntarily complies with Sunshine Laws and Public Records Laws, so committee members should not discuss committee business outside of meetings. If committee members have any questions, they should address them to staff.

Anne Zavorskas addressed the agenda item of approval of SCVB meetings sponsorships, noting that Kelly Defebo handles meeting sponsorship requests but could not be present at this meeting. The Board of Directors has requested that the Marketing Committee review and approve the sponsorships prior to the Board's final approval. It is a new duty for the Marketing Committee. Members had been sent a memo from Kelly Defebo prior to the meeting outlining proposed sponsorships for eight meetings from FY 2012 into FY 2014.

Committee members requested additional information about some of the sponsorships, and Anne Zavorskas will provide this additional information to the committee at its next meeting. However, the committee members wished to move forward on approval of the sponsorships. Laurie Pike moved to approve the sponsorships outlined in Ms. Defebo's memo; Morgan Gerhart seconded the motion. The motion passed. [NOTE: Meetings sponsorships will be brought back to the Marketing Committee for final approval at the next meeting.]

Erin Duggan then provided an update on an issue before the Public Relations Committee, namely input for a promotion during the September need period. She described the 30 Days of Discovery promotion that previously has been used during this time period but no longer is effective. Some considerations for the September period are that many visitors are in-state travelers and are last-minute bookings. The SCVB is looking to build brand awareness for Sarasota County for this period and to expand the promotion from simply attractions to other offerings, such as dining, shopping and other activities. The promotion needs to be inclusive, consistent and digestible.

Some promotion suggestions from staff and the Public Relations Committee are:

- Buy One Get One (BOGO) – must be easy to administer.
- Breakfast on Us – logistics are difficult.
- Sunny Hour – half-off deals in the afternoon.

Considerations, questions and comments include:

- Program must be easy to administer
- Who is our audience? Visitors and local residents.
- The time period of the month of September is good.
- Consider keeping the name “30 Days of Discovery” to maintain continuity
- Have SCVB website or visitors center be the source of the coupon
- Promote two weeks in advance
- Do we consider limiting to 30 deals, available on a first-come, first served basis?
- Coupon book? Gift card? Punch cards?
- Must be a consistent offer and must tie to the SCVB promotion
- Making partners’ front-line staff aware of the promotion is a problem (as occurs during Savor Sarasota Restaurant Week)

One of the committee members asked the outcome of the voucher idea previously discussed for Savor Sarasota Restaurant Week. Erin Duggan shared that the Board of Directors found the voucher program too complex to administer.

The Chair then called for consideration of the next agenda item of web projects for booking engines and online reviews. Anne Zavorskas noted that atLarge is working on updating the website, that an Arts page and German micro-site are in development, and the new U.K. micro-site is complete. The first discussion was regarding online reviews. To be considered are:

- Should there be a place on the website for online review?
- Such a place would need to be monitored.
- Should we show aggregated reviews on the website?
- Should partners be able to opt in/out?
- Would it be better to let consumers use TripAdvisor?
- Online reviews can add benefits to partners; they would need education (Tourism U) on how to use them effectively.

Bernie Gottschalk shared that she had reached out to her Shirtsleeves group, comprised of some 90 CVBs in the US and Canada who are partner based, asking them for feedback regarding online reviews. Most respondents suggested using TripAdvisor, which incurs no cost and is independent of the CVB.

The committee members were polled about the use of TripAdvisor reviews. Three partners use it; one is thinking of using it; one goes to TripAdvisor and cuts/pastes reviews to forward to potential customers. Other comments were: will reviews drive visitation, and if so, in what way? It may be too new, with too many questions, to consider at this time. The committee was polled regarding adding TripAdvisor to the website. Eight members are in favor of adding it to the SCVB website; three were against; eight members favored allowing partners to opt in/out of participation in the TripAdvisor online review program.

The issue of potentially changing the current booking engine from Travelocity to one of three other options was discussed. The three options outlined by atLarge are: Regatta, Jack Rabbit, Seekda, and atLarge provided a breakdown of costs, benefits, pros and cons. Another option would be to move the Travelocity booking engine to a more prominent location on the website to see if it could become more effective. Discussion included the following points:

- Some of the other providers have restaurant and attraction options in addition to lodging
- What length of contract would be required for other providers? One year.
- Jack Rabbit tends to be used for corporate travel, and Sarasota travelers are mainly leisure travelers.
- Regatta offers partners more benefits.
- Expedia works well and should be considered. atLarge will look at cost and benefits for Expedia.

Due to the shortness of time and the need for additional information, this topic will be revisited at the next meeting. In the meantime, the Travelocity button will be relocated to a more prominent place on the website.

The next agenda item was SCVB cooperative advertising. There may be additional opportunities for national advertising. The US Airways insert was successful but we don't know its ROI. Should we consider broadening our co-op advertising to other publications? Where can we take co-op? Suggestions were:

- explore one large piece, including smaller pieces
- consider other types of advertising such as Amtrak Arrive magazine, Jet Blue magazine, Delta Airlines magazine.
- ask agency to provide a rough plan
- success requires a tightly themed program
- consider what we can do for restaurants

The next meeting of the Marketing Committee will be on April 11, 2012 at 3:00 PM at the Visitors Center.

Laurie Pike noted that the Helmsley Sandcastle Hotel was nominated for a Stanley Award by the Receptive Services of America, and was honored to be nominated.

The meeting was adjourned by acclamation.