

SARASOTA®

—AND HER ISLANDS—

*Longboat Key · Lido Key · Siesta Key · Casey Key
Venice · Manasota Key · Englewood · North Port*



Fiscal Year 2010

Business Plan Summary and Budget

Mission: To make Sarasota County the must-see destination on Florida's Gulf Coast

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Fiscal Year 2010 Business Plan Summary

The Sarasota Convention & Visitors Bureau has transformed its marketing strategy to focus on Sarasota's unique attractions, and it continually monitors all marketing expenditures to ensure that Sarasota County receives the greatest return on its marketing investment.

In January 2008, the SCVB launched the "Go Beyond the Beaches" marketing campaign. Consumer response to this message that emphasizes Sarasota's differentiating assets has been positive. With a vertically integrated campaign, the SCVB has been able to react quickly to changes in the market. For instance, if Siesta Beach receives the Top Beach in the U.S. designation in 2010, we will be ready to include it in all of our campaigns. Expanded market research has allowed us to predict market trends and adjust accordingly. The backbone of the new SCVB marketing strategy is the newly-built website which allows the SCVB to build relationships with its customers and opens new opportunities for community partnerships.

Public relations will tell so much more of the Sarasota County story, and the investment in this area has paid off by exceeding goals for generating media impressions. We will continue to focus on small, in-state meetings business and grow the number of sporting events we host.

As part of our plan for 2010, the SCVB is recommending that we conduct a Visitor Industry Strategy to update the 2002 Nichols Gilstrap roadmap for the County's tourism industry to guide us to 2015 and better align the tourism industry with the overall economic development strategy.

Finally, we will continue to be opportunistic in discovering new means of promoting Sarasota County while striving for the most economical means of efficient and effective delivery of our marketing programs.

Strategy 1 - Marketing and Sales

Increase Sarasota and Her Islands brand awareness and visitation.

Overview:

In FY 2010, the SCVB will concentrate on marketing and sales efforts that have proven successful from FY 2009. Utilizing the SCVB's new web technology and database backbone, targeted marketing will continue. Return on investment (ROI) and economic impact analysis will be conducted in all areas – destination advertising, meetings and leisure sales, international sales and sports marketing. The SCVB will build partnerships locally and nationally to promote the diversified assets Sarasota County offers that are “beyond the beaches.” New partnerships and a continuing focus on successful marketing and sales efforts will increase Sarasota's brand awareness and visitation. The SCVB will brand attractions, downtowns, eco-tourism and Sarasota tours (e.g., architectural tours) as part of the destination.

A. Advertising Strategy

Advertising for the destination will continue to build on the “Go Beyond the Beaches” campaign both in print and online. The SCVB Partner cooperative online and print advertising opportunities will continue providing Partner exposure and leads. New photography will highlight additional action-based activities showcasing *specific* Sarasota County destination locales. Additionally, visitor and resident video testimonials will share first impressions and the inside scoop on what to do and what to see in Sarasota County. Value packaging featuring destination deals also will continue, as they generate high levels of engagement and press. For greater efficiencies and savings in FY 2010, the SCVB will bring full service advertising agency activities in-house or with a small local firm.

B. Web Strategy

In FY 2010 the SCVB will utilize the newly-developed website backbone to increase online engagement levels and content distribution through email and mobile platforms. Website content aggregation will increase as the SCVB strives to form Sarasota County partnerships for content. The *MySarasota* platform will allow visitors the ability to create customized downloadable itineraries for their visit to Sarasota County. Continued work on social media sites also will drive traffic to www.sarasotafl.org, increasing visitation. The Discover Natural Sarasota County nature tourism portion of the website will be rebuilt to showcase expanded ecotourism activities.

C. Meetings and Leisure Sales Strategy

In FY 2010, the SCVB Meetings and Leisure Department will continue efforts to acquire small meetings from associations primarily from the southeast, as well as from businesses within Sarasota County. The “Bring it Home,” campaign will encourage local businesses to keep meetings and events in Sarasota County which will be accomplished by sales calls and sponsorships. Additional networking with local businesses will build a wider base of contacts, encouraging more meetings to be held in Sarasota County. We will also work to create a solid group of small market meeting planners locally and nationally.

In FY 2010, there will be a major focus on bringing regular, revenue-producing bus tours to Sarasota County through sales calls domestically, email marketing and a direct mail campaign.

D. Sports Marketing Strategy

The SCVB Sports Marketing Department will bring a mixture of large and small local and national sporting events to Sarasota County facilities and hotels in FY 2010. Additional work will be done to expand local and national awareness of Sarasota County by promoting the benefits of holding events in Sarasota County. The SCVB will emphasize the new rowing potential in Sarasota County by marketing and advertising Sarasota County as a rowing destination to scholastic, national, and international teams and organizations. It will develop stronger evaluation criteria for events returning after the second year. Additionally, we will implement a housing system to provide a more accurate method of accounting for room nights generated by specific sporting events.

E. International Sales

International visitation is predicted to be flat or decrease significantly in certain markets. Efforts to hold off this decline include desk-side visits with key firms and travel agencies, expanding efforts to get producers to the Sarasota area for educational visits. We will pull back from traditional consumer and trade shows and replace with one-on-one visits to key travel producers in the UK and Germany. We will continue to partner with Manatee County through shared representation in Germany.

F. Market Research

The SCVB will use the expanded market research to target markets and segments and to refine advertising messages. The SCVB will continue to conduct traditional domestic focus groups along with online consumer research. Conduct a major conversion study of the consumer responses to SCVB advertising to determine whether they visited Sarasota and which advertising vehicles were the most effective. By collaborating with the arts community, the SCVB will create a greater understanding of Sarasota's cultural travelers.

Strategy 1 – Outcomes:

- Maintain FY 2009 Partner print and online cooperative participation of \$84,000.
- Maintain our overall brand awareness as measured for FY 2009.
- Maintain FY 2009 international visitation numbers.
- Increase number of unique visitors to www.sarasotafl.org by 10%.
- Increase average time spent and number of pages viewed on site by a total of 50%.
- Increase consumer e-newsletter opt-ins by 17%.
- Increase search engine positioning and referrals by 30%.
- Form two strategic partnerships in Sarasota County to enhance www.sarasotafl.org content.

- Grow the economic impact of SCVB-generated meetings by 1%
- Increase leads by 5%.
- Increase SCVB-generated bookings by 5%.
- Book three “Bring it Home” meetings.
- Provide a minimum of three iDSS seminars for Partner training in 2010.
- Increase the number of events in Sarasota County by 10% with two events in South County.
- Increase the economic return on investment for hosted events.
- Secure a minimum of two new rowing events in Sarasota County.

Strategy 2 – Public Relations, Promotions and New Products

Overview:

The SCVB Public Relations efforts will build upon past successes by continuing to cultivate relationships with journalists while using social media and press release optimization to take efforts to a new level. We will create one new product opportunity for Sarasota County. The SCVB will continue its lead in bringing marketing outlooks, new technologies and successful marketing techniques to the tourism industry in Sarasota County. We will continue collaborations for area festivals and events. The SCVB will lead a community planning process to create a Sarasota County Tourism Industry Vision and Strategy 2011-2015.

A. Public Relations Domestic

The Ringling International Arts Festival will be used as the vehicle to promote the cultural tourism amenities available throughout the year. We will laser-target on two additional niche audiences: family and women’s travel and nature/adventure travel. Our media relations firm will focus exclusively on proactive pitching to widen the exposure for the Sarasota and Her Islands message. The SCVB will work closely with partners and local personalities to create a variety of “beyond the beaches” stories to be told via satellite media tours and itineraries for visiting journalists. RSS feeds will be added to the media section of the website. Visibility on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter will be increased by creating campaigns that can be tracked to prove ROI. Participate in opportunities such as missions, receptions and marketplaces that position us favorable in front of key journalists.

B. Public Relations UK

The SCVB will continue to share UK office with Bradenton Area CVB to spend PR dollars more efficiently. We will position our islands as being a great value with an unexpected twist within Florida, which is a known and trusted brand. The method is to gain online and offline coverage with this message but also promote the twist, e.g beach plus bonuses - cultural offerings such as The Ringling International Arts festival, eco-adventures, hot culinary scene and unique circus heritage. We will participate in media opportunities at Pow Wow 2010 in Orlando and host key journalists on pre and post Pow Wow trips.

C. New Product and Promotions

The SCVB will develop new products around Sarasota County's natural and cultural assets. Continue the promotion of existing programs such as Savor Sarasota, Tour Sarasota Architecture and Circus Heritage, along with continuation of the competitive funding program for new product events or festivals. A viral campaign will be created to assist in the promotion of new products and to raise overall brand awareness to destination. Work with national tourism experts and leaders on potential new markets for Sarasota County. We will provide leadership in Florida for cultural and heritage tourism in addition to media relations efforts. Sponsorship will be provided to the Venice Theatre as they turn international attention to Venice in June 2010 as they host the International Community Theatre Festival.

Strategy 2 – Outcomes:

- Increase the number of domestic and international print media impressions by 5%.
- Increase the number of domestic and international online media impressions by 15%.
- Increase the value of promotional exposure by 5%.
- Create one “new product” opportunity for Sarasota County.
- Create viral campaign.
- Create Sponsorship Package.

Strategy 3 – Exceptional Service

Overview:

Ensuring that visitors and potential visitors have superior communications, fulfillment and visitor information services is a critical function of the marketing cycle. Ensuring prompt delivery of a visitor guide or correctly answering a question can be the different in the consumers decision whether to visit Sarasota County.

A. Visitor Center

Embrace tracking in all aspects of the Visitor Center – tracking calls, subject of calls, what guests are looking for and continue to establish ROI for hotel and business referrals. Visitor spending will be maximized by providing training to affiliate businesses in Sarasota

County regarding the history of Sarasota, festival and key event notifications. We will increase proficiency of the Visitor Center staff and volunteers to ensure their knowledge of the assets of Sarasota County. The Visitor Center will continue to be the one-stop place for visitors by providing theater and attraction tickets. Information on area events will be shared with hotel front desks on a weekly basis. The SCVB will form partnerships with organizations to improve delivery of visitor services.

B. Fulfillment

Produce an upscale, informative Visitor Guide which is fully paid for by the private sector and assists visitors in going “Beyond the Beaches.” Promptly fulfill consumer requests and provide live assistance to visitors using the website. Continue the partnership with the Siesta Key and Venice Chambers to assist in the distribution of collateral.

Strategy 3 – Outcomes:

- Maintain visitor satisfaction ratings of 95%.
- Visitor center staff and volunteers score 90% in Sarasota County knowledge tests.
- Maintain Visitor Center traffic.