

2016 Sales & Marketing Plan

1. Introduction from Executive Director

The 2016 Sales & Marketing Plan is different from its 2014 and 2015 versions. The 2014 plan was written by a brand new executive director to start to educate the Board of Managers about the factors I would use to make decisions about our core efforts. The overriding message of that plan was to show a holistic approach was needed to influence potential visitors through the various communication channels we use with our customers.

The 2015 plan was an extensive work that was developed by a new sales and marketing team. Besides the obvious purpose providing good planning before acting, last year's plan was also an exercise for each team member to understand why they do what they do and how each of them depends on the others. The 2015 plan also contained a lot of detail to demonstrate to stakeholders that the CTB is an accountable organization; that our team brings to the table expertise in the areas of sales and marketing; and that building the tourism economy in our communities is a professional endeavor.

The 2016 plan is simpler in its presentation. But make no mistake, months of preparation have gone into this document with many background meetings and documents produced to further guide the team in carrying out the details of an effective Sales & Marketing Plan.

2. Situation Analysis - update

The 2015 plan referenced above is still available on our website and contains an extensive situation analysis. This plan will only update a few key factors impacting our communities or the market.

- a. **Impact of technology on decision making continues to evolve:** No marketing plan for a 12-month period can accurately forecast the ever-changing impact of technology on consumer behavior. We will outline a few key strategies related to the use of available marketing technology. To be nimble as we struggle to get on the cutting edge, we recognize that we will be trying new ideas not available to us at this writing.
- b. **Progress toward new hotel development:** Our 2015 plan outlined the changing Louisville hotel market. These developments are still in process. However, the view of new hotel development on our side of the river is more focused. Announced hotel projects at the Jeffersonville Gateway and Rose Hill Elementary sites are more firm in their timeline now, and a hotel concept has been introduced into the River Ridge Gateway development discussions. Another new factor is the 2-year closure of KICC and the business that was booked there being moved either to single-property hotel space or moved to a later year after reopening. This will reduce compression from Louisville city-wides starting 2016 Q3.
- c. **The end of bridge construction + tolling + KICC closure:** Downtown Louisville attractions are the #1 motivating factor for travel to the Sunny Side. The impact of 2016 Q4 tolling on regional visitor behavior still cannot be predicted. During 2016, the bridge construction will wind down and contracted hotel rooms will start to disappear; this will certainly have an impact on our regional hotel demand. Will

this plus the Kentucky International Convention Center's closure cause hotels (that currently don't respond to group business leads and RFPs) to work more closely with us? Will the addition of Southern Indiana room supply into 2017 further erode recent RevPAR growth or will the addition of hotel meeting room square footage open up new opportunities for our destination?

3. Marketing & Communications messaging guidelines & focus

- a. We tell stories to real people (personas); we don't advertise attractions or broadcast information to broad swaths of the population
- b. Speak with an authentic voice in all marketing and communications
- c. Print is for developing brand; digital is for developing customer relationships but should reinforce brand promise.
- d. Focus on experiences that were the best motivators for travel to our region per the 2014/2015 Visitor Profile & Image Study.

4. Leisure Travel

- a. Objective: Establish in the minds of potential visitors to the region that Southern Indiana's lodging, attractions, dining and retail are options that complete the essential Louisville experience.
- b. Key Strategies
 - i. Execute campaign and partner development in support of a Southern Indiana "Culinary Trail."
 - ii. Expand media coverage of Southern Indiana's destination stories through targeted media relations efforts.
 - iii. Advertise in select markets within 100-200 mile radius using limited print placement for brand messaging and extensive digital placement for engagement and lead development.
 - iv. Engage with customers on website and all digital media/platforms.
 - v. Using all available data, develop engaging storytelling content on social media sites that will motivate our fans and followers to share our content.
 - vi. Continue building email marketing lists from visitors and residents; produce monthly e-mail marketing collateral that gets opened, engages and drives web traffic.
 - vii. Improve the Visitor Centers' influence on visitors already in market, enhancing their trip experience leading to superior trip satisfaction, social sharing and repeat visits.
- c. Action Plan
 - i. Overall
 1. Select one design vendor to ensure continuity among all marketing communications (applies to group/meetings/sports markets as well).
 2. Develop messaging calendar that coordinates, integrates and drives communications in all channels.
 - ii. Visitor Center
 1. Select design vendor to plan future Visitor Center improvements including potential satellite and mobile centers.
 2. Improve travel counselor's access to and use of technology to provide better service to customers.
 3. Expand presence at regional festivals to collect subscribers to our email newsletter.

- iii. Media Relations
 1. Purchase Cision media database subscription and develop targeted lists of journalists.
 2. Participate in selected media marketplaces to pitch the destination.
 - iv. Publications
 1. Produce an annual visitor's guide for in-market distribution, in partnership with the News & Tribune and supported by advertising.
 2. "Lure" brochure for distant-market rack distribution.
 - v. Website
 1. Conduct website usability research, which will inform design and content decisions.
 2. Select web design vendor and launch new website in Q1 2017.
 - vi. Advertising
 1. Develop up to four primary ad campaign designs consistent with Bureau's overall messaging that is aimed at "personas;" these will be used throughout the year in print and digital.
 2. Integrate paid digital placement with landing page development, email collection, customer engagement and conversion while planning for useful analytics. Measure, analyze, report and adjust.
 3. Expand use of re-targeting and geo-targeting for paid media placement.
 - vii. Social: Engage in personal conversations with customers about our destination
 1. Speak with an authentic voice to converse, not broadcast.
 2. Include links to outside content to enhance credibility.
 3. Offer useful and helpful information to visitors that reinforces the brand promise.
- d. Goals
- i. Acquire email addresses from 12% of visitors to the Visitor Center.
 - ii. Acquire email addresses from 5% of visitors to the Welcome Center.
 - iii. Acquire email addresses from 5% of landing page viewers.
 - iv. Generate 35,000 bot-filtered website visits while meeting or exceeding industry averages for time-on-site and bounce rates.
 - v. Increase social media following by 25%.
 - vi. Engage SM fans and followers with the primary goal of increasing social shares of the Bureau's content by 20%.
 - vii. Generate stories about travel and tourism in Clark and Floyd Counties with an ad value equivalency of at least \$100,000.
 - viii. Conduct FAM tours with at least 25 travel journalists.
 - ix. Pitch stories to at least 40 journalists.

5. Motorcoach

a. Objectives

- i. Establish in the minds of tour operators and group leaders that Southern Indiana's lodging, attractions, dining and retail are options that complete the essential Louisville experience.

- ii. Position the CTB as a trusted source and partner for tour operators planning tours to the region.
 - iii. Position the CTB as a service provider that local group-friendly businesses can trust to bring incremental new customers to their door.
- b. Key Strategies
 - i. Continue working with partners to develop and build current product offerings.
 - ii. Expand travel planning resources and tools to close more sales.
 - iii. Create incentives for tour operators to choose Southern Indiana for overnight stays and dining.
 - iv. Using evaluations of past trade shows, engage with the targeted travel trade leads only at the most effective trade shows.
- c. Action Plan
 - i. Build section of the website where travel professionals can download profile sheet, themed itineraries and group tour planner.
 - ii. Work more with restaurant partners to build a culinary product for groups.
 - iii. Execute more direct electronic mailings highlighting our area to tour operators.
 - iv. Media placements to drive awareness and reinforce sales efforts.
- d. Goals
 - i. Tour operator leads: 175 (Reached 204, but we will not attend NTA in 2016)
 - ii. Group Tour Leads: 75 (Reached 65 increased because of new group leader show).
 - iii. Day Trips: 550.
 - iv. Overnight Buses: 50 (goal equal to 2015 to work on training partners to track groups).

6. Sports Events

- a. Objectives
 - i. Establish the region's collection of sports facilities as an option for sanctioning bodies and event rights-holders.
 - ii. Build bonds between the CTB, facility owners, and other regional sports organizations.
- b. Key Strategies
 - i. Create sports identity for Southern Indiana to propose events in the area.
 - ii. Facilitate sharing of resources among community sports stakeholders.
 - iii. Develop leads through targeted trade show participation and through local stakeholders.
- c. Action Plan
 - i. Complete facilities inventory to develop sports product.
 - ii. Form Sports Advisory Group with local community members
 - iii. Implement internship program for specific sports social media campaigns.
 - iv. Work with local educational superintendents to build relationship with local high schools.
 - v. Assist attendance building with media placements and social sharing.
- d. Goals
 - i. 15 qualified sport related leads (Stake Holders, Rights Holders or Natl. Governing Bodies).

- ii. 2 Site visits to one or more facilities.

7. Meetings and Conventions

a. Objectives

- i. Develop awareness of regional meeting opportunities among residents who are involved in business, association, religious, fraternal, or affinity organizations and assist in appropriate bid requests.

b. Key Strategies

- i. Educate community members about how the CTB can help locals who want to host meetings and events in our area.
- ii. Develop stronger relationship with One Southern Indiana; reach the chamber's membership to develop more leads for meetings in Southern Indiana.

c. Action Plan

- i. Network with businesses, government agencies, associations and other groups through community outreach efforts.
- ii. Seek opportunities (speaking engagements and face-to-face meetings) to educate stakeholders about the CTB's purpose in facilitating bringing meetings and conventions to the destination.
- iii. Work with local hotels to find business when bridge construction ends.

d. Goals

- i. 7 local businesses contacts that influence meetings in Southern Indiana.
- ii. 15 qualified meeting planner leads.
- iii. 5 meetings serviced.
- iv. 5 site visits.

8. Future Considerations

- a. We will continue to develop the group tour, sports, and meetings markets. As these markets mature, we will develop personas to assist in these marketing efforts.