



MEMBER RESOURCES





Dear member,

We're pleased to have you on board with Experience Columbus! As you now know, we are the only organization 100% dedicated to marketing our great city. We can't wait to connect you to the \$8.7 billion travel and tourism industry in Central Ohio.

The following guide will help you to learn about all of the tools available to you as an Experience Columbus member.

You'll find that there is a wide variety of resources; however, choose what works best for you to achieve your individual business objectives. Check out the Tips for Success section to get an idea of your most useful benefits. We're also happy to meet with you to walk through all of your options and to help develop a plan tailored to your needs and interests.

In the meantime, begin with the Getting Started tab, where you'll find a checklist to help you get your membership tools up and running. And if you have questions, don't hesitate to contact us.

We're here to help any time.

Sincerely,

The Experience Columbus Membership Department

GETTING STARTED



Use this checklist as a guide to getting started.

WITHIN 3 MONTHS:

- Update your business/contact information in the Member Portal.
- Update all publication and member web page listings in the Member Portal.
- Add events to the calendar.
- Send us photos.
- Send us brochures for distribution in our visitor centers.
- Hang your member decal.
- Read the weekly Member News e-newsletter for upcoming events and industry news.
- Schedule a consultation with the Membership Department to develop a plan to maximize the value of your membership.

WITHIN 6 MONTHS:

- Talk to us about setting up a meeting so key Experience Columbus staff members can get to know you, at our place or yours.
- Attend an Evening Exchange (monthly networking event), educational event or member orientation.
- Utilize the Convention Calendar to connect with meeting planners and events coming to Columbus.
- Network using the Member Directory.

WITHIN 9 MONTHS:

- Update Experience Columbus on any changes or news since you joined.
- Touch base with the Membership Department to follow up on your original consultation and find out what else you can do to take advantage of member tools.
- Review *Certified Tourism Ambassador™* (CTA) and *Experience Dedicated™ Destination* (EDD) programs.
- Review the Get Involved section of this handbook to choose other ways to engage in the industry.
- Review and update your Member Record information (listings and contact information) in the Member Portal.



MEMBER PORTAL

The Experience Columbus Member Portal is an online hub where you'll access many of your member tools. Following are items you'll manage via the Portal. Access it at extranet.columbus.simpleviewcrm.com.

PASSWORD

Change your Member Portal password, as needed.

MEMBER RECORD

This section is where you'll input your business' contact information, including your billing address, public address and contact details. Be sure to keep this current, as it feeds Experience Columbus' internal address book and tells us how to contact you.

• YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION

This is Experience Columbus' master database of contacts we have on file for your organization. It is used to communicate with you regarding special events, opportunities, leads and marketing information. Be sure it is correct.

• LISTINGS IN EXPERIENCE COLUMBUS MATERIALS

You will manage your listings for Experience Columbus' *Visitors Guide*, website, member directory and *Tour Planner Guide* (if applicable) via the Portal. Change, freshen and tailor your messaging and keywords at any time to ensure visitors and/or meeting planners find your business.

LEADS

The Convention Sales, Convention Services and Tourism departments and the Greater Columbus Sports Commission send leads through the Member Portal to hotels and facilities. Members receive an email notification when they have a new or updated lead to view. It contains response instructions in the Action Requested field. Once a group is confirmed for Columbus, we also obtain hotel members' contracted room blocks and then pick-up information in this section of the Member Portal.

To have the best chance of earning business, it is important to respond by the Response Due Date and follow the instructions under Action Requested. The system does not allow you to respond after the due date; all leads default to a pending status at that time.

REPORTS

• CONVENTION CALENDAR

Use The Experience Columbus Convention Calendar to promote your business to association executives and meeting planners bringing conventions and events to Central Ohio. More detailed instructions are here:

experiencecolumbus.com/member-resources.

• MEMBER DIRECTORY

Use the Experience Columbus Member Directory to network with other members and develop new business opportunities.

• BOOKING ROOMFLOW CALENDAR

This report, which can be pulled by month, provides definitive and tentative sales leads from both Experience Columbus and the Greater Columbus Sports Commission.

MONTHLY ACTIVITY

• OCCUPANCY REPORTING (LODGING ONLY)

The Occupancy Report shows the hotel occupancy percentage (number of rooms sold/number of rooms available for sale) and average daily rate (ADR) for member hotels throughout Columbus. Through member hotel responses, the report is compiled each month to give Experience Columbus, and the member hotel community, an idea of the average hotel performance in the city broken down by area. These are tracked monthly, with hotel members recording their numbers each month in the Portal.

• LEISURE GROUP TRAVEL REPORT (LODGING ONLY)

Annually, more than 1,500 leisure groups visit Columbus and more than 500 sales leads for future business are generated. Monthly, we request Leisure Group Travel information for those groups that stayed in a Greater Columbus hotel. Reporting is done in the Member Portal. Requested details include the number of groups, the attendance count and room nights generated.

Leisure Travel Groups are defined as a group of people traveling together in their free time for enjoyment and leisure and include:

- Tour Operator
- Bus Company
- Family Reunions
- AAA group
- Senior Center group
- Church/Faith-based group
- Bank Travel club
- Affinity Group (any "club" type group, like the Red Hats, book club, etc.)
- Student/Youth Travel

- **LEISURE GROUP TRAVEL REPORT (LODGING ONLY), CONT.**

Group size can range from 10-100+ people and use various forms of transportation. Most leisure groups travel via motorcoach, mini-coach, executive coach, school bus or van, with the exception of Family Reunions which will come in multiple cars.

- **EXPERIENTIAL TOUR REPORT**

This report is requested to document the number of experiential tours hosted (actualized) each month.

PARTNER BULLETINS:

Upon logging into the Member Portal, you will see Partner Bulletins on the homepage. In this section, Experience Columbus will share any important information to our members such as Member Portal updates, industry stories or reporting. Please make sure to read any new bulletins you see in this section.

MARKETING TOOLS



LISTINGS

You'll manage your listings via the Member Portal. Change, freshen and tailor your messaging and keywords at any time to ensure visitors and/or meeting planners find your business. (Note: service-related members are listed only on the Experience Columbus website and Member Directory.) After you have submitted an update in the Portal, it will be reviewed and approved by Experience Columbus staff within two business days.

• VISITORS GUIDE

Published twice a year, the *Visitors Guide* is the primary fulfillment piece for requests at experiencecolumbus.com and the 866-EXP-COLS tourism hotline. The *Visitors Guide* also is distributed in Experience Columbus' visitor centers, regional AAA offices and travel shows, hotels, the airport, convention center and various meeting facilities, and through member organizations. There is a 250,000 distribution for the Spring/Summer edition and a 150,000 distribution for Fall/Winter. It also is available to view online at experiencecolumbus.com.



• WEBSITE

Experiencecolumbus.com helps you promote your business directly to visitors, locals and professional meeting and travel planners, funneling them to your website. Your description may contain up to 2,000 characters and should include keywords that would commonly be used to find your business. You also may post up to eight photos.

• MEMBER DIRECTORY

This online publication available via the Member Portal is a directory of all Experience Columbus members. This valuable resource is used for networking with other members and to develop new business opportunities.

• TOUR PLANNER GUIDE (IF APPLICABLE)

The *Tour Planner Guide* is an annual publication that promotes group-friendly Experience Columbus members to leisure group tours. The Tourism Department distributes 4,000 guides annually on-site or in follow-up to tour operator conventions and trade shows, in addition to general inquiries by tour operators and group leaders.

MAXIMIZE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR LISTINGS

- Have good descriptions that include key search terms in your member web page description on experiencecolumbus.com.
- Be sure to add photos to website listings. (Note that logos will not be posted.)
- If you have meeting space, complete the meeting space grid in the Member Portal.
- Hotels, facilities and restaurants should update amenity information on a regular basis, as we use this information to search for the venues that meet the needs of our clients.

DISCOUNTED ADVERTISING IN EXPERIENCE COLUMBUS PUBLICATIONS

Experience Columbus members get discounted advertising in the *Visitors Guide* and *Tour Planner Guide*. For details, contact Great Lakes Publishing: 614-461-7645.

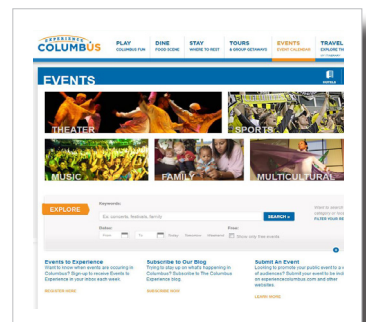
PHOTOGRAPHY

Attractions, entertainment, culinary, shopping and lodging members can gain extra exposure by sending us photos that show all there is to see and do at your business. Images should feature people, action and diversity. We use them in promotional tools, including, but not limited to, our website, publications, signage, direct mail and brochures to promote Columbus. We also distribute photos to outside sources promoting Columbus as a destination, including media and meeting or tour planners. To review all the details to submit photos go to: experiencecolumbus.com/member-resources.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

The events calendar is the most popular section of experiencecolumbus.com. This calendar is also used to produce event listings for the *Visitors Guide*, weekly and monthly Events to Experience emails, and quarterly event calendars shared with various media outlets.

Make sure your public events are listed on our website, so they can be found by visitors. We're looking for events with broad appeal that would interest visitors to Columbus.



Sharing your events is simple and free. Submit events at ohioeventfinder.com. Your information will be promoted on artsinohio.com and columbusmakesart.com, and it will be shared with Experience Columbus, TourismOhio and *Ohio Magazine*.

Member events are candidates for additional exposure, such as a feature on our website homepage or a feature in our weekly or monthly Events to Experience emails.

Note: The calendar only lists events with broad appeal that would interest visitors outside of Columbus such as festivals, sporting events, live music, visual arts and events of that nature.

VISITOR CENTER BROCHURE DISTRIBUTION

Experience Columbus' visitor centers, located in the Arena District, at the Greater Columbus Convention Center and at Easton Town Center, serve 70,000+ visitors per year. We'll display your brochures if your establishment is an attraction, entertainment venue, retail store or restaurant.

COLUMBUS INSIDERS CLUB

Insiders subscribers receive a monthly e-newsletter with specific discounts and special opportunities only available to club members. Registration is free.



Submit an Insiders Club offer and your business will be promoted to 30,000+ local or 28,000+ out-of-market subscribers. For details on how to submit an Insiders Club offer, call the Marketing Department at 614-221-6623.

LEISURE ADVERTISING CO-OPS

An annual advertising campaign targets a 3-4 hour drive radius of Columbus, focusing on Cleveland, Charleston, Huntington, Pittsburgh, Erie, Fort Wayne and Ann Arbor. Target audiences are Families, Empty Nesters/Grandparents and Young Professionals. Messaging focuses on Family Fun, Culinary, Arts & Culture and Fashion/Shopping. The overarching media strategy is to reach consumers when they are in the stages of the travel planning cycle in order to increase leisure travel with overnight stays to Columbus. Cooperative advertising opportunities may be available for members throughout the year. Call the Tourism Department for details at 614-221-6623.

**VIP PROGRAM**

The VIP program offers admission discounts exclusively to convention delegates and Sports Commission event attendees. The purpose is to motivate these visitors to experience more of Columbus. Our goal is to send additional business to your doors. Discount cards are provided to groups by our convention and event services staff.

It's easy to participate. Simply commit to granting these visitors your existing group rate through the end of the calendar year. There's no participation fee. Think of it as a free marketing opportunity. For details, contact the Marketing Department at 614-221-6623.

SOCIAL MEDIA/BLOG FEATURES

When the content is relevant to the visitor audience, Experience Columbus can help amplify online stories and dialogue about your business via our blog, Facebook pages, Pinterest, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram and Flickr accounts. Contact the Marketing Department for details at 614-221-6623.

CONVENTION AND SPORTS ALERT

Each month, we send an e-mail containing details on the groups coming to Columbus. It includes helpful information on group attendance, location, accommodations, if attendees are on their own for meals and more. Use this tool to plan your staffing as well as identify potential networking and marketing opportunities. To be added to the email list, contact the Convention Services Department at 614-221-6623.

CONVENTION CALENDAR

The Experience Columbus Convention Calendar is a valuable marketing tool you can use to find upcoming conventions. Use the calendar to promote your business to association executives and meeting planners who are bringing these conventions and events to Central Ohio. The planners' contact information is available and you are able to contact them via mail or email. Be sure you know best practices to follow when marketing to this audience. Read the tip sheet at:

experiencecolumbus.com/member-resources.

DOWNTOWN HOSPITALITY BANNER PROGRAM

More than 400 street pole banner locations are available for marketing public events/attractions in downtown Columbus. For more details, visit:

experiencecolumbus.com/member-resources.

MEMBER DECAL

Display your member decal on your business' window or front desk to welcome visitors and convention attendees to your business.



WEEKLY MEMBER NEWS E-NEWSLETTER

Keep us in the loop about what your business is up to and we may feature you in the weekly e-newsletter all members receive. This is a great way to market your business to Experience Columbus' 1,000+ members. You can also purchase a banner ad. Call the Membership Department for details at 614-221-6623.

DON'T FORGET to review the Tips for Success section of this handbook. You'll get great advice on which tools to use and how to meet your business' individual goals.

CONNECT



MEMBER DIRECTORY

This online publication available via the Member Portal is a directory of all Experience Columbus members. It's a valuable marketing tool for business development and finding other members with whom you can network or partner. Search for and download the data as often as you wish.

ADD US TO YOUR LIST

Keep us in the loop. It'll help us when we promote you to visitors, meeting planners and other audiences. Plus, we may feature you in the weekly Member News e-newsletter. Add members@experiencecolumbus.com to your business' press release distribution list.

WEEKLY MEMBER NEWS E-NEWSLETTER

This weekly e-newsletter is filled with news you need to know, including upcoming events and industry happenings. Take time to skim this weekly briefing and learn about opportunities that may be advantageous to your business. And when you keep us in the loop with what your business is up to, we might feature you. Limited advertising opportunities are also available. Call the Membership Department at 614-221-6623.

EVENING EXCHANGES

Relationships are vitally important in business. Mix and mingle with members and staff of Experience Columbus at these quarterly networking events, which are free for members to attend. We often partner with other Columbus networking groups to ensure there are always new people to meet.

Donate a door prize. Your business will be announced to the more than 100 people who typically attend our Evening Exchange events. And if you have event space, you can also host an Exchange to get exposure for your business.



EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS

Experience Columbus hosts professional development workshops six times per year to help members stay on top of the latest marketing trends and tools. These workshops are free for members to attend. Topics have included everything from pitching the media and Facebook advertising tips, to using and understanding Google Analytics.

ANNUAL EVENTS

Purchase sponsorships, tables and individual seats to the following annual events, which provide fantastic networking opportunities:

- **EXPERIENCE COLUMBUS ANNUAL MEETING**

900+ industry professionals gather from throughout the community to learn about the latest developments within the hospitality industry in Central Ohio.

- **HOSPITALITY HOUSE AT THE MEMORIAL TOURNAMENT**

One of the year's premier networking opportunities, more than 2,000 individuals enjoy VIP hospitality at a private residence located on the 3rd fairway during this four-day PGA tournament, including 400 meeting planners.

- **THE WOMEN'S SPORTS REPORT**

Each year, more than 600 attendees gather with the Greater Columbus Sports Commission to celebrate National Girls and Women in Sports Day and honor achievements by women and girls in Central Ohio.

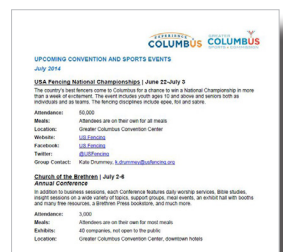
- **THE MORNING SPORTS REPORT**

Nearly 900+ local and corporate sports enthusiasts get the inside scoop on sports in Columbus at this Greater Columbus Sports Commission annual breakfast.



CONVENTION AND SPORTS ALERT

Each month, we send an email containing details on the groups coming to Columbus. It includes helpful information on group attendance, location, accommodations, if attendees are on their own for meals and more. Use this tool to plan your staffing, as well as identify the potential networking and marketing opportunities. To be added to the email list, contact the Convention Services department at 614-221-6623.



CONVENTION CALENDAR

The Experience Columbus Convention Calendar is a valuable marketing tool you can use to find upcoming conventions. Use the calendar to promote your business to association executives and meeting planners who are bringing these conventions and events to Central Ohio. The planners' contact information is available and you are able to contact them via mail or email. Be sure you know best practices to follow when marketing to this audience. Read the tip sheet at: experiencecolumbus.com/member-resources.

EVENTS TO EXPERIENCE

Be in-the-know about what's happening around Columbus. Sign up to receive our free events calendar by e-mail. Our events calendars are packed with activities happening around Central Ohio, and are available on a weekly or monthly basis. Register at experiencecolumbus.com/event-calendar.

SOCIAL MEDIA/BLOG

When the content is relevant to the visitor audience, Experience Columbus can help to amplify online stories and dialogue about your business via our blog, Facebook pages, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn accounts.

Be sure to connect with us on these platforms, too:

- experiencecolumbus.com/blog
- facebook.com/experiencecolumbus
- facebook.com/columbusfoodscene
- instagram.com/experiencecolumbus#
(#expcols, #cbusfoodscene, #lifeincbus or #cbusmeetings)
- pinterest.com/expcols
- twitter.com/expcols (#expcols, #lifeincbus)
- youtube.com/experiencecolumbus

DID YOU KNOW you can use the Member Directory to invite new members to attend an Evening Exchange or other event with you? This is a great way to expand your business contacts. Find more ideas in the Tips for Success section of this handbook.



GET INVOLVED

BECOME A CERTIFIED TOURISM AMBASSADOR™

A positive visitor experience is critical to increase the number of visitors to our city, how much they spend and, most importantly, their desire to come back. The *Certified Tourism Ambassador™* (CTA) program is a national certification and respected professional achievement that was developed to foster a destination-wide culture of quality service and welcoming citizenry.



Through this program, you and your frontline employees, ambassadors and volunteers will improve your knowledge of the Columbus region, craft answers to frequently asked visitor questions, interact with peers, share best practices and develop a better understanding of your roles in increasing tourism business.

Join the more than 1,900 Columbus professionals who have earned their CTA designation. Sign up at joinuscolumbus.com/cta.

PARTICIPATE IN THE EXPERIENCE DEDICATED™ DESTINATION PROGRAM

Join other area businesses to bring more visitor business to our community. We're the first in the nation to be officially accredited by The EXPERIENCE Institute to develop a customized visitor-centric program for Greater Columbus.

When you participate in the *Experience Dedicated™ Destination* (EDD) program, you work with the entire local industry to collect ongoing visitor data. Your business will receive trend data and overall insights on your sector of the hospitality industry. This data will inform customer service and improve the overall visitor experience throughout Greater Columbus, resulting in increased visitation, repeat visits and enhanced spending. It's a win-win. And, there is no cost to participate. Learn more and sign up at joinuscolumbus.com.



VOLUNTEER WITH COLUMBUS

Find entertaining leisure volunteer opportunities in Columbus! It's one-stop shopping for you and your friends to engage in the fun events and activities that take place in our city. Learn more at joinuscolumbus.com/volunteer.



You can also use this program to recruit and manage volunteers for your event(s). Call the Visitor Services staff to learn more at 614-221-6623.

MAKE IT COLUMBUS

Think about your organization. Do you have regional or national meetings? A youth sporting event? Maybe corporate training? Do you belong to a professional association with meetings? There's no reason any of these events can't take place in Columbus. And plenty of reasons they can!

Let us help you with our free services. We'll do all of the heavy lifting. All you need to do is provide information on a group that can consider coming to Columbus. Experience Columbus and the Greater Columbus Sports Commission will take it from there. Visit makeitcolumbus.com or contact the Convention Sales Department at 614-221-6623.

GROUP TOUR COUNCIL

Annually, more than 1,500 leisure travel groups visit Columbus and more than 500 sales leads for future business are generated.

If your business services group travel customers, you should belong to the Columbus Group Tour Council (GTC), a free added benefit to Experience Columbus members who cater to groups. Joining the GTC is the best way to receive business from the group tour market and keep current with changing trends. Groups range in size from 10 to 100 participants and include everything from traditional motorcoach groups to niche groups, such as girlfriend getaways, church groups, bank travel clubs and family reunions, to name a few. The GTC meets every other month with guest speakers on a range of topics, to ensure Columbus continues to offer a top-notch leisure group experience. In addition, all GTC members receive leads from Experience Columbus after attendance at national and regional trade shows. Additional lead opportunities are available through a pay-to-play co-op. To learn more and sign up, contact the Tourism Department at 614-221-6623.

LEISURE GROUP TOURS

Attractions and restaurants have the opportunity to work with the Tourism Sales team to develop a leisure group behind-the-scenes or hands-on experience at their business. Contact the Tourism Department for more details at 614-221-6623.

GREATER COLUMBUS EVENTS COUNCIL

The Greater Columbus Events Council is a group of organizers of annual festivals and large-scale special events. The Greater Columbus Events Council meets quarterly to encourage co-operative planning and promotion of Central Ohio public events, networking and sharing of best practices. To learn more about the group and how to join, contact the Events Department at 614-221-6623. There is no cost to participate.



WHY ARE CONVENTIONS, MEETINGS AND EVENTS IMPORTANT TO THE COLUMBUS ECONOMY?

Columbus is home to a \$7.8 billion tourism industry, part of the \$40 billion tourism economy in Ohio. The hospitality industry comprises 9% of the local workforce, supports 61,000 jobs in Franklin County. As seen in other cities, when local businesses and organizations intentionally host meetings, events and training in their own backyard, the benefits are numerous.

-  MILLIONS OF DOLLARS IN BUSINESS ACTIVITY
-  NEW AND REGENERATED LOCAL COMPANIES
-  JOBS
-  COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

HOW CAN YOU HELP? Think about your organization. Do you host regional or national meetings? A youth sporting event? Maybe corporate training? Do you belong to a professional association with meetings? Bring meetings, conventions, trade shows and events home to Columbus!

STAFF OVERVIEWS

CONVENTION SALES DEPARTMENT

The Convention Sales Department markets Columbus as a convention, meeting and trade show destination nationally. The department collaborates with other hospitality industry professionals, including hoteliers and facility operators, to produce bids to host meetings and conventions in Columbus. The department also exhibits at trade shows, conducts sales calls and hosts site inspections, among other sales activities.



CONVENTION SERVICES DEPARTMENT

The Convention Services Department works with meeting planners once an event is committed to be held in Columbus. Staff help to promote the destination, connect planners with our members who can supply goods and services, welcome attendees to the city and make sure visitors have a great experience in Columbus. The department offers these free services to planners no matter if the planner booked through our office or not. Services verifies room blocks for all meetings that are managed solely by a Convention Services manager and requests from hotels the actual sleeping room pickup numbers for all groups in our database. Services also manages a group of on-call Columbus Ambassadors and provides housing service for a dozen conventions each year.



EVENTS DEPARTMENT

The Events team creates and manages high-profile events for Experience Columbus and the Greater Columbus Sports Commission. These annual events and corporate partnerships increase awareness of our organization and the local hospitality industry, while providing increased funding opportunities. The Events staff also manages the Downtown Banner program and the Greater Columbus Events Council.

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

The Marketing and Communications Department supports sales efforts via strategic marketing, public relations and social media tactics. Marketing and communications staff manage all outbound communication, working closely with each department of Experience Columbus, as well as the Greater Columbus Sports Commission, to achieve objectives. The department also is engaged in efforts to raise the profile of Columbus as a vibrant, world-class city. Finally, the department is charged with creating awareness of the economic and social value of the hospitality industry, as well as enhancing the reputation of Experience Columbus both in and outside Greater Columbus.

MEMBERSHIP DEPARTMENT

The Membership Department handles all sales, services and retention of Experience Columbus members. Our membership base consists of 1,000+ businesses representing a variety of industries. Additionally, Membership works with all departments of Experience Columbus to assist in the promotion of members.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

The Public Affairs Department serves as a liaison between Experience Columbus and our members and partners to local government and civic leadership. Public Affairs coordinates activities with regional elected officials, business leaders and leading non-profits aligned with our mission.

TOURISM DEPARTMENT

The Tourism Department markets and sells Columbus as a leisure destination to groups and individual consumers. Tourism also manages the *Certified Tourism Ambassador™* (CTA) and *Experience Dedicated™ Destination* (EDD) programs, the Columbus Group Tour Council, the Experience Columbus' visitor centers and the Volunteer with Columbus program.



NEED TO PUT A FACE WITH A NAME? “Meet” the team. Review the enclosed organizational chart showing names and headshots.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

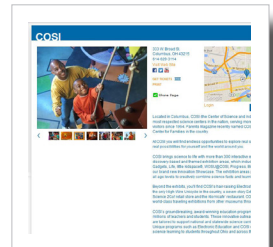


We know your business is unique. That's why we offer a wide variety of resources to help you meet your individual objectives. These tips will help you determine which tools will be most beneficial to you. And the success stories that follow will demonstrate the innovative ways other members are maximizing their benefits. We encourage you to be creative with your member resources and brainstorm how you can tailor them to your goals.

We'd also love to meet with you to walk through all of your options and help develop a plan to fit your needs. Call us at any time.

HOW TO MARKET TO VISITORS

- Above all, use our Member Portal to update your business listing on experiencecolumbus.com. Use keywords to help visitors find your business and list special offers. Don't forget to add photos.
- Provide our visitor centers with a supply of your brochures and menus. Introduce yourself to the visitor center staff and make sure they know their contact at your establishment for additional information or assistance.
- Make sure you respond to requests to update your business information by the deadlines for our *Visitors Guide* and other publications. This will ensure visitors have the most accurate information about your business at their fingertips.
- To ensure you get these requests to update your details, make sure your staff's contact information is up-to-date in the Member Portal.
- Make sure your visitor friendly public events are listed on our website. Submit arts and cultural events at ohioeventfinder.com. Submit others to industry.discoverohio.com. Your information will be shared with Experience Columbus. See the Marketing Tools section of this handbook for complete details.
- Take advantage of discounted advertising in the *Visitors Guide* and *Tour Planner Guide*. Call Great Lakes Publishing for details at 614-461-7645.
- Attractions, entertainment, culinary, shopping and lodging members should send photos of all there is to see and do at your business to us. We'll use them in our marketing materials and you'll get extra exposure for your business.



HOW TO MARKET YOUR BUSINESS TO CONVENTION GROUPS

- Verify your listings on experiencecolumbus.com and in our publications to be sure they are correct and reflect the services you want to promote. Make changes via the Portal. Extra tip—check out how your competitors market themselves on our website.
- Market your business to meeting planners. Hundreds of conventions come to Columbus each year. Use the Convention Calendar in the Member Portal to search for and connect with groups that could use your business' services.
- Review the monthly Convention and Sports Alert. Share the information with your staff so they can provide a “Columbus welcome” to convention and event attendees. Plan for busy periods (e.g. extend business hours to accommodate convention delegates and schedule additional staff). Subscribe by contacting the Convention Services Department at 614-221-6623.
- Make sure your services are represented in all appropriate membership categories. This enables meeting planners and visitors to find your business. For example, a restaurant that also can host banquets should add a Facilities listing for a small additional fee. This tactic exposes your business to more Convention Sales/Services referrals.
- Respond to Convention Sales/Services leads in the Member Portal. Reply by the Response Due Date and follow the instructions under Action Requested. (Note: The system does not allow you to respond after the due date.)
- Participate in member networking events. Meeting professionals are among guests at our after-hours Evening Exchange networking events, our Annual Meeting in the spring and our Hospitality House at the Memorial Tournament.
- Work with our Convention Services Department to accommodate requests to post convention welcome signs at your business.
- Post your member decal in your storefront as many convention attendees view this as a “welcome.”



HOW TO MARKET TO LEISURE GROUP TOURS

- Schedule a meeting with our Tourism Sales staff to educate them on the services your business provides to Group Tours.
- Make sure you respond to requests to update your business information by the deadline for our annual *Tour Planner Guide*. If you are a restaurant, hotel or transportation provider, be sure to respond to the separate survey that is used to gather information specific to this market.
- To ensure you get these requests to update your details, make sure your staff's contact information is up-to-date in the Member Portal.
- Join the Group Tour Council.

HOW TO MARKET YOUR BUSINESS TO OTHER EXPERIENCE COLUMBUS MEMBERS

- Include other members' brochures in your mailings or display them at your business when you feel their services complement yours, such as a florist and a candy maker. Educate their staff about your business.
- Send a welcome note to new Experience Columbus members with a discount and information about your services. New members are listed in the weekly Member News e-Newsletter the first week of the month.
- Expand your business contacts by inviting a new member to attend their first membership event with you.
- Invite a targeted category of members to your facility for a tour. For example, a restaurant member can invite members who are meeting planners. This also will provide a networking opportunity for them.
- Attend Experience Columbus' after-hours Evening Exchange networking events. Bring your promotional materials to share. Arrive early to welcome other members as they arrive. Donate a door prize and your business will be announced.
- Sponsor one of our Evening Exchange networking events to promote your services. Typically, host facilities provide the room use at no cost and offer complimentary hors d'oeuvres. If your funds are limited, partner with multiple members to host an event. For example, an Evening Exchange could include a facility, a caterer, a magician and a band that partner together.
- Purchase sponsorships, tables and individual tickets to our annual events, including our Annual Meeting and Hospitality House at the Memorial Tournament. With hundreds to thousands of attendees—most hospitality industry professionals—these events provide fantastic networking opportunities.



HOW TO EDUCATE THE EXPERIENCE COLUMBUS STAFF ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS

- Keep the Membership Department updated on any enhancements, staff changes, promotions and address changes. Update your business and contact information through the Member Portal.
- Schedule a one-on-one consultation with our Membership Department to meet our staff and talk about your business. We can walk you through all your member tools and develop a plan tailored to your goals.
- Contact the Membership Department to schedule a time to meet key staff members in other departments.
- Invite our staff to tour your facility or to an open house to experience your services.
- Introduce yourself to our staff at member events.

SUCCESS STORIES

Victorian Village Guest House

Lisa Craig Morton, owner of Victorian Village Guest House, was interested in learning how to leverage social media to build her business. As a member of Experience Columbus, she was able to attend a workshop on that subject at no cost. And most importantly, she came out with a list of actionable items that could be implemented right away.



Lisa focused her efforts on Pinterest, and within 30 days of tying the platform to her business, her Google Analytics showed that it was the number three source of traffic to her website. “That was a real tangible lesson and one of the benefits that I get from being part of this organization,” Lisa says. “They offers workshops where I can learn about things I don’t really know about, and bam—immediately it’s impacting my business in a positive way.”

The Candle Lab

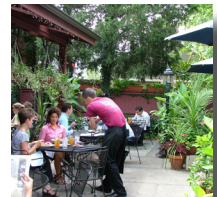
Steve Weaver’s business—The Candle Lab—is significantly different now from when he first started working with Experience Columbus. Steve worked with the Tourism Department to develop an experiential leisure group tour aspect of The Candle Lab, and its success has changed the whole business model. The business has grown and now does much more catering to groups, conventions and bus tours.



“We are a different business now because our affiliation with EC,” Steve says. “They are not just promoting us but they’re actually helping build our business. We are better at doing what we do now because of our membership with them.”

Barcelona

For Barcelona, Scott Heimlich says part of the key to success is attracting guests beyond locals. And for his business, one of the most valued member benefits is being able to market to this audience in ways not affordable on their own. They’ve learned that taking full advantage of the tools that target individual travelers and groups is very powerful.



“We could spend thousands of dollars on advertising, but none of us can afford that in our individual budgets,” Scott says. “The out-of-town visitor, whether it’s leisure or business—EC brings them to our front doors. All you have to do is take advantage of the services that EC has to offer and you get new guests on your doorstep every day.”