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September 10, 2014 – Submitted to the City of Salem*



2014-15 Business Plan

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TRAVEL SALEM'S DNA

Mission

Travel Salem markets and promotes the greater Salem area as a premier, year-round destination for conventions, events and leisure travelers. Serve as the official destination marketing organization and a vital tourism economic development generator for the region.

Vision

Through bold innovation and integrated partnerships, Travel Salem's programs and services heighten the visitor experience and drive economic impact, which supports local businesses, job creation and an enhanced quality of life.

Values

Travel Salem is committed to service, integrity and excellence that provide tangible results and strengthen the businesses and communities served.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS & ENGAGEMENT

Create broader understanding of tourism as an economic development generator utilizing the key performance measurements (EEI, TOT, Leverage). Create partnerships & resources to influence community dialogue and decision-making that impacts tourism, quality of life and the Salem area's viability as a travel destination. Support local businesses by providing opportunities and solutions to open doors, address challenges and harness best practices.

- a) Develop a Travel Salem Community Action Committee to serve as industry advocates on boards, task forces and committees
 - Engage Travel Salem Board members as well as industry professionals to leverage connections & influence
 - Supply advocates with materials needed to build awareness of the industry (e.g. pocket facts, reports, statistics)
- b) Redefine who sits at the region's tourism "table," creating broad engagement to help shape industry dialogue and outcomes
 - Ensure diversity of interests & perspectives are included in conversations that impact direction & vision of the region's tourism industry (e.g. commodities, agriculture, health, education, manufacturing, high-tech)
- c) Facilitate regional branding strategy that positions the Mid-Willamette Valley as a premier destination
- d) Develop tools & resources to assist the industry with planning efforts & forecasting (e.g. master calendar)
- e) Develop the "tourism canon" of key defining principles that are embraced by stakeholders and used to help establish a unified industry platform; incorporate into communication strategies
 - Engage key stakeholders in dialogue about how to define the tourism industry so that tourism outcomes & initiatives are widely understood & embraced
- f) Engage with key stakeholders, and work synergistically with other industries (e.g. commodities, manufacturing, healthcare, education), on issues that impact the Salem area's appeal as a premier destination
 - Develop creative solutions with local businesses that operate on a global basis to help promote the region as a vibrant destination (e.g. Kettle Foods, Garmin, Yamasa, Sanyo, Willamette Valley Fruit Company)
- g) Enhance partnerships to leverage influence and resources
 - Utilize key partners to open doors for the tourism industry & enhance access to new opportunities

CAPACITY BUILDING

Develop long-term stable funding, strategic staffing levels, and the technology and tools necessary for organizational growth.

Various strategies will be employed to drive results in the following areas, however, detail is not provided to protect trade secrets.

- a) Expand Convention Sales Program with a focus on sports & recreation
- b) Create new Destination Development program with a focus on product development and retention & expansion of existing assets
- c) Implement organizational infrastructure with administrative support & technology
- d) Maximize available resources and seek new funding streams through partnerships, innovation and product development initiatives
- e) Maintain Membership participation to represent the diverse business community in Marion & Polk counties
- f) Create a supportive environment for growth & development of Cultivating Communities, Travel Salem's nonprofit foundation

MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Position the region as a desirable travel destination for convention & leisure travelers utilizing vertically integrated marketing & communication strategies. Leverage the regional travel experience by connecting visitors to the unique people, products, and stories that will lengthen the visitor's stay. Drive Travel Salem's key performance measurements.

- a) Develop and incorporate a comprehensive brand promise in all communication strategies; evangelize the Salem area brand "Absolutely Oregon"
- b) Emphasize Travel Salem's central pillars (culinary, recreation and cultural/heritage) to position the Salem area as a premier leisure & convention destination
 - Position pillars in all strategies & platforms to build on consistent messaging
 - Package other categories & niches in with pillars (e.g. culinary & family, recreation & shopping) to enhance destination appeal
 - Develop compelling visual elements to represent the pillars & leverage in advertising, public relations, consumer engagement & sales efforts
 - Recruit & engage partners that represent the pillars
- c) Leverage key partnerships and strategies to explore points of intersection that expand Travel Salem's reach and effectiveness (e.g. Travel Oregon, Willamette Valley Visitors Association, Travel Portland, SEDCOR, Chambers of Commerce, and groups representing Travel Salem's central pillars)
 - Serve on the Willamette Valley Visitors Association's board of directors ensuring the Salem region is represented in all initiatives
 - Engage with Travel Oregon's programs at the highest level
 - Partner with SEDCOR, regional Chambers of Commerce, downtown partners, business & neighborhood associations, etc.
- d) Work with local & regional partners to create opportunities for innovation & collaboration (e.g. cultural heritage, downtown Salem, regional "listening tours")
- e) Facilitate strategy to develop a "one voice" messaging platform around the region's identity
- f) Maintain & enhance a strong and dynamic Travel Café & Visitor Information Network focusing on personal and customized assistance; provide platform for innovative connections between local businesses and the consumer
 - Seek new Travel Café partnerships to enhance the visitor experience
 - Research technology to enhance the visitor experience
 - Recruit new AbsolutelyTix partners
 - Expand the Visitor Information Network as appropriate to leverage high-traffic, strategic locations

- g) Leverage online strategies to promote the Salem area as a preferred destination
 - Maximize search engine optimization strategies to maintain TravelSalem.com in top three search results
 - Maintain & innovate social media & consumer engagement opportunities & promotions
 - Broaden & expand content & points of interest on Interactive Online Map
 - Research new Interactive Online Map niche opportunities
 - Leverage OregonWineCountry.org, TravelOregon.com and others to drive traffic to TravelSalem.com
 - Expand online referrals to TravelSalem.com through an integrated network of member & partner sites
 - Create a strong sports & events presence on TravelSalem.com
- h) Execute a vigorous public relations and communications strategy to increase exposure, build credibility with target markets and the community, and drive consumers to action
 - Implement creative content ideas that engage & motivate consumers to action
 - Mine the editorial database to harvest the most advantageous pitches
 - Create “pocket facts” to serve as talking points about the tourism industry & keep key messages top-of-mind
 - Leverage Travel Oregon & Willamette Valley Visitors Association’s PR efforts
- i) Expand advertising initiatives in a variety of print, online and social media channels to support leisure & convention marketing
- j) Leverage partnerships to collect consumer behavior data; implement across platforms as appropriate
 - Update the Salem area & Mid-Willamette Valley visitor profile to leverage travel trends, preference and brand opportunities
- k) Provide recruitment & relocation support to area businesses
 - Serve as the primary resource for visitors interested in relocating to the Salem area

CONVENTIONS & EVENTS

Contribute to the overall economic health of the region by booking conventions and events through direct sales efforts, cooperative promotional efforts and innovative marketing strategies. Drive Travel Salem's key performance measurements.

- a) Expand Convention Sales program with a focus on sports & recreation
 - Hire a Sports & Events Sales Manager
 - Implement a Sports Committee to serve as knowledgeable advisors; Committee to provide guidance & networking connections for securing new opportunities
 - Leverage Agility Funds using new & creative strategies
 - Attend trade shows & provide familiarization tours
- b) Focus on high-yield citywide business opportunities, and develop reciprocal partnerships to support & drive regional benefit
 - Work in tandem with large venues such as Oregon State Fair, Salem Conference Center, Wallace Marine Park and other meeting/event facilities to identify opportunities and leverage existing marketing efforts and resources
 - Meet annually with key partners to review coordinated strategies for securing citywide opportunities
- c) Drive business on weekends & shoulder seasons (lower volume months)
- d) Implement a master calendar featuring major events & conventions/groups
- e) Evaluate housing bureau options
- f) Utilize a wide variety of sports venues and opportunities to capture events and tournaments
 - Partner with the City of Salem to secure annual national softball tournaments
 - Partner with local sports associations & organizations (e.g. Cascade Futbol Club, Kroc Center) to identify and secure new opportunities
 - Work with collegiate partners (e.g. Corban University, Willamette University, Western Oregon University, Chemeketa) to identify and secure new opportunities
 - Engage with the Oregon Sports Commission and Oregon State Athletic Association as well as other related groups to identify and secure new opportunities
 - Work with regional Chambers of Commerce to identify regional sporting venues
- g) Utilize online strategies to engage meeting planners
 - Actively push convention, event and meeting information through Travel Salem's social media channels
 - Develop a membership & community referral promotion to leverage local champions with connections to associations & groups

- h) Research creative niches (e.g. chess tournaments, robotics, tattoo, dance/cheer competitions) as well as primary feeder markets
 - Work with venues & local leaders to determine feeder markets & developing trends
 - Leverage community & business connections to identify niche opportunities
 - Partner with high schools to leverage club connections & competitive circuits
- i) Leverage cooperative marketing opportunities (e.g. tradeshow, familiarization tours, advertising, sales missions)
 - Work with MarCom to create a convention/event PR plan to market Salem to meeting, event and group tour publications
 - Engage with the economic development initiatives of key partners (e.g. cities, counties, chambers, SEDCOR)
 - Secure partners for co-op tradeshow & advertising opportunities
- j) Maintain reciprocal regional partnerships to keep business in the mid-Willamette Valley
- k) Market & promote sustainable practices of the region's hospitality industry as a way to capture group business interested in green destinations
 - Utilize MarCom initiatives to deliver key messages to meetings industry
 - Leverage venue achievements & enhancements in communication strategy (e.g. Salem Conference Center LEED certification)
- l) Continue to engage with the Salem Area Lodging Association, Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association and other industry partners
 - Ensure two-way dialogue through active engagement with industry partners to strengthen the region's ability to compete & capture new business
- m) Develop and pitch pre-packaged itineraries to groups

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

Contribute to the overall economic health of the region by researching, exploring & facilitating the development of new & existing tourism products. Identify collaborative partners & private funding to implement opportunities. Due to this being a new program, it may take 1-3 years to realize new & expanded products.

- a) Create a comprehensive Destination Development program (retention & expansion) with an emphasis on coordinating & growing existing product, and recruiting new events & amenities to the Mid-Willamette Valley
- b) Hire a Destination Development Manager
- c) Focus on product development that will be sustainable for the long-term
- d) Research & explore new & existing tourism products & opportunities (proactive & reactive)
- e) Coordinate with partners & communities to better leverage the region's main pillars: Culinary, Recreation & Cultural Heritage (e.g. events, products, packages)
- f) Provide information & support to parties seeking to establish or expand tourism opportunities within the region; act as liaison with permitting, land use & other matters
- g) Seek collaborative partners & private funding to implement opportunities
 - a. Facilitate access to marketing resources, information on financial & capacity building resources for development opportunities (e.g. grants, sponsorships)
- h) Mitigate barriers to existing & potential tourism-related opportunities & activities

SERVICES

Provide the information, resources and support necessary to enhance the travel experience of the convention & group delegate and bolster repeat visitation.

- a) Secure first-time & repeat business utilizing proactive communication and outreach strategies and by providing superior customer service
 - Build attendance & delegate awareness through pre-conference promotion
 - Provide value-added services & support to venue & lodging partners for groups already booked
- b) Continue to develop partnerships with local businesses and marketing entities in an effort to recruit new opportunities, enhance client experiences and streamline efforts
 - Partner with venues to include Travel Salem services information in sales packets
 - Partner with organizations & businesses that enhance Salem conventions/events (e.g. downtown promoter, regional Chambers of Commerce)
 - Network with fraternal & civic organizations
- c) Utilize industry partners as “champions” to increase awareness of services offered, and recruitment of new opportunities
 - Engage residents & businesses through public relations outreach & speakers bureau
 - Network with fraternal & civic organizations
- d) Continue to deliver a “service” brand: a strategic and thoughtful approach to high-level customer service which will enhance recruitment & retention of group business
 - Conduct post-event follow through & leverage meeting planner feedback to provide testimonials
 - Provide customized services to add value & enhance the group’s experience
 - Encourage partners to participate in the Q Cares customer service program to ensure that the service exceeds customer expectations

TRAVEL SALEM BOARD & STAFF

STAFF

Angie Morris
President & CEO

Marketing & Communications

Irene Bernards
Executive Vice President,
Director of Marketing & PR

Dee Hendrix
Marketing & Online Manager

Kara Kuh
Public Relations Manager

Barb Cowan
Guest Services Manager

Kristine Lindholm
Administrative Assistant

Conventions & Groups

Debbie McCune
Vice President, Director of Sales

Lourdes Gomez
Destination Development Manager

Brian Chung
Sports & Events Sales Manager

Tara Preston
Program Assistant

Community Development

Sue Nichols
Community Development Director

14-15 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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