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2015-16 Business Plan

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TRAVEL SALEM'S DNA

Mission

Travel Salem markets and promotes the Mid-Willamette Valley 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. Dashboard, 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) Promote the "tourism canon" of key defining principles that are embraced by stakeholders and used to help establish a unified industry platform (e.g. tourism is the front door to economic development, diversified jobs economy); incorporate into communication strategies
- 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) Continue focused Sports Sales Program to secure new sports & recreation opportunities, as well as grow existing events
- b) Continue to cultivate Destination Development program with a focus on product development and retention & expansion of existing assets
- c) Leverage Wine Country Plate funds to expand marketing & promotions that enhance regional destination appeal
- d) Improve organizational infrastructure with administrative support & technology
- e) Maximize available resources and seek new funding streams through partnerships, innovation and product development initiatives
- f) Maintain Membership participation to represent the diverse business community in Marion & Polk counties
- g) 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 & incorporate a comprehensive brand promise in all communication strategies; evangelize the Mid-Willamette Valley brand "Absolutely Oregon"; leverage visual content to create awareness & influence visitation
- 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 Mid-Willamette Valley as a preferred destination
Website – TravelSalem.com

- Maximize search engine optimization strategies to maintain TravelSalem.com in top three search results
- Create a responsive site & mobile-friendly interface
- Establish a booking engine to secure the visitor transaction
- Streamline navigation (shift emphasis to a visual, user-friendly experience)
- Create a Sports & Recreation section highlighting venues & regional resources for planners & event organizers
- Broaden & expand content & points of interest on Interactive Online Map (e.g. lodging, tours, trails)
- Launch new Destination Development components (Global Greeters Network, Salem Like a Local, wine country tours, cycling trails, agritourism)
- 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

Social Media

- Launch a comprehensive social media campaign to drive organic visitor engagement & boost regional profile
- Execute a Facebook strategy that boosts audience exposure
- Incorporate a blog feed featuring guest bloggers & local community perspectives
- Incorporate an Instagram feed showcasing the region with fresh visuals
- Maintain & innovate social media & consumer engagement opportunities & promotions

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

- Update the Salem area & Mid-Willamette Valley visitor profile as needed to leverage travel trends, preferences 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) Continue to expand the Convention Sales Program with a focus on sports & recreation
 - Engage the Sports Committee to serve as knowledgeable advisors & 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 Convention Center, Capital FC Timbers, The Hoop, 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) Roll-out housing bureau program
- f) Utilize group surveys to gather information on attendee lodging experiences, spending habits, leisure activities & length of stay
- g) 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. Capital FC Timbers, Kroc Center, Oregon State Fair) 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
- h) Utilize online strategies to engage meeting planners
 - Actively push convention, event & meeting information through Travel Salem's social media channels

- Develop a membership & community referral promotion to leverage local champions with connections to associations & groups
- i) 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
 - j) 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
 - k) Maintain reciprocal regional partnerships to keep business in the Mid-Willamette Valley
 - l) 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)
 - m) 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

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
- e) 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 tourism product, as well as growing & enhancing existing tourism product. Identify collaborative partners & private funding to implement opportunities. This is a new program which may take 1-3 years to realize results.

- a) Execute a comprehensive Destination Development program (retention & expansion) with an emphasis on enhancing existing product, and researching & implementing new events & promotions for the Mid-Willamette Valley
- b) Focus on product development that will be sustainable for the long-term
- c) Seek collaborative partners & private funding to implement opportunities that align with the region's main pillars: Culinary, Recreation & Cultural Heritage (e.g. events, products, promotions)
 - Listening sessions by guild/location
 - Research & develop library of opportunities
 - Map opportunities to pillars & prioritize to highest value & regional need
 - Examine existing programs & projects, determine what can be enhanced or retooled to target overnight stays
 - Create new product to increase destination appeal & long term EEI
- d) Mitigate barriers to existing & potential tourism-related opportunities & activities
 - Serve as liaison with permitting, land use & other logistics
 - Facilitate access to marketing resources, information on financial & capacity building resources (e.g. grants, sponsorships)
- e) Create Destination Development resources (e.g. volunteer roster, key contact network)
- f) Create industry toolbox & workshops (e.g. business plan development, sponsorship packages, readiness guidelines)

TRAVEL SALEM BOARD & STAFF

STAFF

Angie Morris
President & CEO

Marketing & Communications

Irene Bernards
Executive Vice President,
Director of Marketing & PR

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Marketing & Online Manager

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Vice President, Director of Sales

Brian Chung
Sports & Events Sales Manager

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Event & Services Manager

Community Development

Sue Nichols
Community Development Director

15-16 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Executive Committee

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