Thursday - August 24, 2023

Session 1: 2023 Futures Study   9:15 am – 10:15 am
Greg Oates, MMGY NextFactor   High Lonesome Barn

2023 Futures Study: The DestinationNEXT Futures study is the most comprehensive overview of DMO trends and strategies worldwide. The new 2023 Study was released in July 2023, identifying increasing DMO priorities related to destination and community development, data-driven partner support, and government relations. MMGY NextFactor, which produces the Study, have been regular speakers for the Visit Denver board. In 2016 the president, Paul Ouimet, and his team assisted the board and staff in developing the Tourism Roadmap, a 10-year destination master plan. MMGY NextFactor is an industry-leading consulting firm specializing in travel and tourism. The company developed the proprietary DestinationNEXT Assessment Tool, which empirically identifies opportunities and challenges across 24 indicators related to destination strength and community alignment. The MMGY NextFactor team of experts have leveraged the tool to deliver insights and strategies to more than 300 destinations worldwide.

At this year's retreat, Greg Oates will provide the results of the latest Futures Study, which he authored. He will give an overview of the Study's key takeaways and strategic insights for DMOs, supported by related case studies to show real-world opportunities for Visit Denver, our industry partners, and our community. Greg will lead off the day with the Futures Study overview. Then, at the end of the day, he will facilitate a group discussion with the Board about the number one trend which is how AI will impact the travel and tourism industry and how Visit Denver can capitalize on this new technology to further optimize our visitor economy.

Greg Oates, MMGY NextFactor: Greg Oates, SVP of Innovation at MMGY NextFactor, has a proven track record working with the public, private and civic sectors to develop destination master plans and other strategic frameworks for North American DMOs. He is recognized as an industry leader for identifying how governments, industry and communities collaborate to develop a shared strategic vision for their collective future. And more importantly, his work prioritizes how stakeholders execute the required strategies for achieving shared success. Before MMGY NextFactor, Greg led tourism and hospitality brand partnership strategy at Skift, a travel industry B2B media, event, research, and consultancy group. He produced marketing strategy and research for dozens of DMOs ranging from VisitBritain to Visit Phoenix. He also developed strategic corporate plans for hospitality companies including Airbnb and Marriott.
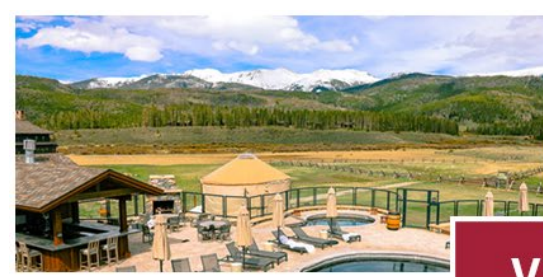
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Session 2: VISIT DENVER Branding Session   10:15 am – 11:30 am
Justin Bresler, VISIT DENVER   **High Lonesome Barn**
Andrea Stone, BrandJuice
Amanda Cook, BrandJuice
J.J. Ament, Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce
Kourtny Garrett, Downtown Denver Partnership

**VISIT DENVER Branding Session:** This session will allow Board members to take a deep dive into research that VISIT DENVER conducted to develop the city's new visitor brand. Furthermore, the session will explore the complementary brands from the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Denver Partnership so that we can explore opportunities for future alignment.

The evolution of Denver's tourism brand tracks with the evolution of the city as a great place to live, work and visit. It has grown from a "barely there" brand when Denver was purely a gateway city to the Rockies, unable to stand on its own as a destination, through the boom & bust energy cycles of the 80s and 90s, and into its present status as a unique urban center, one that's known as much for its big-city amenities as its proximity to Rocky Mountain adventure.

During the Board Retreat session, attendees will hear several short presentations before being asked to weigh in on future opportunities:

1. VISIT DENVER will present a brief brand history to ground us in the present-day work.

2. Executives from BrandJuice, the firm that conducted the most recent research as well as the last several waves, will present the findings from the study.

3. J.J. Ament, CEO of the Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce and Kourtny Garrett, CEO of the Downtown Denver Partnership will, in turn, present their own respective brands, along with a breakdown of their constituents, audiences and marketing goals.

4. Following the presentations, Board members will have a chance to weigh in on what they've heard and to conduct small-group discussions and readouts on opportunities for the three organizations to work more closely together in the future.
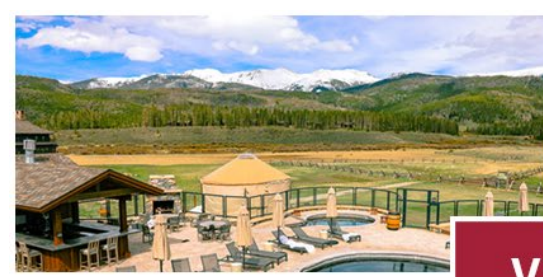
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BrandJuice: BrandJuice is a Denver-based strategy and design house that helps brands, from start-ups to Fortune 100s, mean more. Our team of experts specialize in creating and revitalizing leading brands through a proven blend of strategy, innovation and creative services.

Andrea Stone, BrandJuice: As Managing Director at BrandJuice and a leader at the agency since 2000, Andrea Stone is a builder of brands, culture and relationships. She guides the company's services across insights, strategy and design practice areas. Her mission is to help brands achieve simplicity within complex strategic dynamics and evolving innovation landscapes—a focus that unfolds with bright and colorful vision to help teams craft just the right in-market execution. Her leadership stems from decades of experience, creating connections for impact and growth within B to B and consumer industries—from technology, healthcare and pharma, to consumer, destination and experience brands.

Amanda Cook, BrandJuice: Amanda Cook strongly believes that taking an anthropological approach to creating brands is the best way to influence human behavior, build loyalty and grow market share. With a background in journalism and a fascination for telling a good story (followed by a good laugh), she focuses on engineering brand strategies and conversations that will get to the interconnectedness of ideas, people and solutions. Amanda maintains that without the knowledge of "why", the right solution cannot be found. She applies this approach to build brands for a range of global industries, including consumer packaged goods, tourism, health and place.

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Session 3: 2022 Residents Survey Summary Review and Leisure & Convention Intercept Perception Study **Sean Maher, RRC Associates**	**11:45 pm – 12:30 pm** **High Lonesome Barn**

Leisure & Convention Intercept Perception Study & Residents Survey Summary Review: From 2016 to 2019 VISIT DENVER conducted visitor and meeting attendee perception and ratings study of Denver on a variety of destination-related topics such as safety, transportation, and attractions. The primary objectives of the research were to evaluate real-time visitor perceptions of Denver and track results over time. The methodology used was in-person convention & hotel leisure guest intercept surveys. It is critical to understand visitors' perceptions of downtown, as outlined in the Tourism Roadmap since the area contains such a concentration of hotels, restaurants, and other visitor amenities. This is especially important as downtown continues its recovery, including the return to the office for downtown workers, the return of events, and the completion of the 16th Street Mall.

Sean Maher, CEO of RRC, will be reviewing the results of the 2023 study, examining the change pre- and post-COVID to serve as a benchmark as we continue our recovery in a growing economy. He will also show us relevant trends from 2016 to now.

In addition, Sean will be providing a recap of the 2022 Resident survey, where we captured residents' sentiment towards tourism and related topics such as perceptions and visitation of downtown Denver and Denver attractions and events.

Sean Mayer, RRC Associates: Sean Maher is the CEO of RRC where he oversees all client relations, project management, and strategic planning for the firm. RRC is a market research firm working nationwide in the sectors of tourism, community planning, and urban district management. Prior to joining RRC, Sean spent 11 years as CEO of the Downtown Boulder Partnership where he oversaw marketing, operations, events and recruitment for the 49 square block downtown district. Before joining DBP, Sean headed up private and public economic development efforts in Boulder as head of the Boulder Economic Council and ran the Small Business Development Center. Prior to the BEC, Sean started and owned multiple Ben & Jerry's stores in Boulder and Denver and owned outdoor retail stores in Taos, New Mexico. He holds an MBA from the University of Colorado.
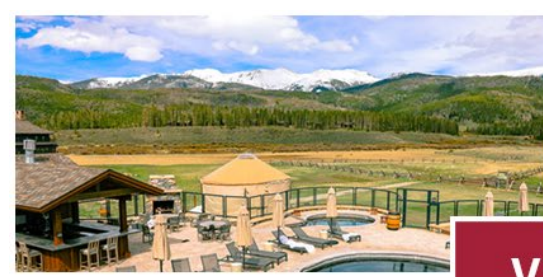
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Session 4: Workforce Session   1:30 pm – 3:00 pm
Todd Munson, VISIT DENVER Board Member   **High Lonesome Barn**
Kelly Pierson & Emily Lapham, Prosono
Lauren Hutchinson, The Tarrance Group
Matt Keeney, Steve John & Tom Comber, AOR
Blake Thelen, Tom Hägglöf & Ainsley Weliver, AOR

**Workforce Issues:** The 2023 Board Retreat session on Workforce Development will focus on our efforts to develop a promotional campaign that highlights the benefits of a career in the leisure & hospitality industry to the statewide 18–20-year-old youth market, which has been identified as a priority audience.

Building on the work at previous Board Meetings and Retreats, the session will highlight VISIT DENVER's role as an industry promoter, and share research conducted by our consulting partners from Prosono and Tarrance Group. The research will share insights from stakeholder groups, educational organizations, and the youth target themselves. Following the research presentation, the AOR Agency will present initial concepts for a campaign.

During the Board Retreat session, you will hear about the two initiatives aimed at achieving the strategic objectives:

1) Research conducted to uncover insights related to language, platforms, channels, and other marketing-related needs of the youth population in Colorado.
   - VISIT DENVER contracted the polling firm The Tarrance Group to conduct a statewide poll of more than 300 people ages 18-20 years old, to gain a better sense of how this group views the tourism and hospitality industry as a potential career path, and to gain insight on how this age group finds career information and consumes media.
   - Prosono implemented additional research to supplement The Tarrance Group's findings. Brief interviews were conducted with educational organizations that work with the 18-to-20-year-old population, including Denver Public Schools, Emily Griffith Technical College, the United Way, and Metropolitan State University School of Hospitality, who also helped distribute the survey to their students.
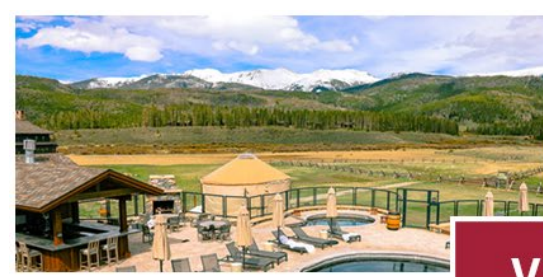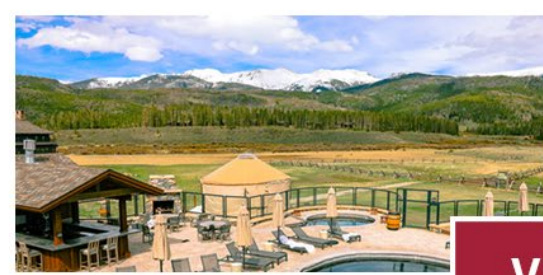
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- Prosono also conducted 15-minute surveys with employers across the tourism and hospitality sector to better understand how these organizations attract and retain talent. Employers represented restaurants, hotels, retail, and outdoor recreation.

2) Development of a content framework with VISIT Denver's marketing partner(s) to develop materials, campaigns, and tools that can be leveraged to connect with this target audience.
    - VISIT DENVER contracted the ad agency AOR to create a marketing campaign, based on the results of the statewide survey and the additional industry research that Prosono conducted.

Kelly Pierson, Prosono: Kelly Pierson is a Senior Strategy Consultant at Prosono who is motivated to help businesses match their operations, programs, and communications with their socially conscious intentions to drive genuine positive impact in communities around the world. She has extensive experience in strategy, corporate social responsibility, branding, and cross-sector partnerships from work with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Target Corporation, the National 4-H Council, the State of Colorado's Office of Outdoor Recreation Industry, and more. Kelly graduated from the University of Notre Dame with a BBA degree in Marketing and a minor in Gender Studies, and she has a Certificate in ESG from CU Boulder. In her free time, Kelly volunteers as a Denver CASA and enjoys refinishing old furniture to give it a new life.

Emily Lapham, Prosono: Emily Lapham is a Manager at Prosono, leading strategic planning, market research, and facilitation efforts for purpose-driven clients across the state and nationwide. Her professional experience has been guided by her desire to unlock the potential of cross-sector partnerships and break down barriers to work, education, and sustainable economic and community development. Over the past decade, she has partnered with dozens of state and local agencies, social enterprises, and nonprofit organizations pursuing innovative strategies to overcome their most pressing organizational challenges. Emily received her MBA, with a concentration in Social Impact and Business Analytics, from UC-Berkeley Haas School of Business and holds a BA in Economics and International Studies from Emory University. In her free time, she can be found volunteering with Back on My Feet or escaping for a run in the mountains.
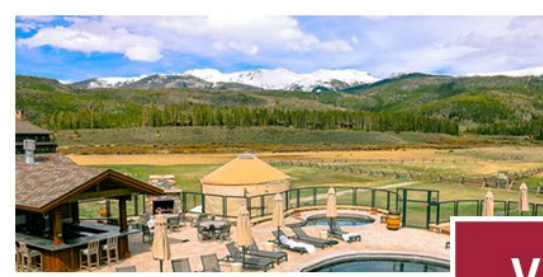
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Lauren Hutchinson, The Tarrance Group: Lauren Hutchinson is a Senior Vice President at the Tarrance Group, one of the most respected and successful survey research and strategy firms in the country. Lauren specializes in the intersection of quantitative and qualitative data, marrying them together to provide campaigns, corporate, and public affairs clients with the most data driven strategy. She brings with her a vast amount of knowledge about Congressional races, from her time at the NRCC, and has worked on campaigns, Super PACS, and Independent Expenditures at all levels. Lauren is an avid hockey fan, and played college hockey at both Western Michigan University, and The American University, where she was named a 2012 Athlete of the Year. Lauren lives in Alexandria, Virgina.

AOR: AOR is a branding, marketing, and web agency in Denver, CO. We are professional problem solvers, original thinkers and all-round nice people that work together to create and foster powerful work and strong relationships. AOR delivers proven results that make a difference for the brands we collaborate with.

Matt Keeney, AOR: Matt has worked at AOR for 30 years. He is known for his ability to throw fuel on the flames of passion, win new business, and delight AOR's current client partners. He is able to lead AOR's cultural and financial goals with a firm awareness of AOR's markets and competitive landscape. He is very active in the Denver arts community and sits on many boards including: Cherry Arts, Cleo Parker Robinson and the Denver Zoo to name a few.

Steve John, AOR: For more than 19 years Steve has developed creative brand strategies and written authentic stories which have turned into award winning work for Wal-Mart, John Deere, Norwegian Cruise Lines (NCL), AT&T and others. Steve has proven experience developing a diverse creative culture which empowers and motivates teams while building strong and lasting client relationships. Working across categories, Steve has written and produced work for all mediums (traditional, VR, social and even a podcast) for start-ups, nonprofits and Fortune 500 companies.

Tom Comber, AOR: Tom is what happens when an artist, writer, and musician battle it out in a mental steel cage match for vocational supremacy. After vacillating between majors in art and English—and scratching his musical itch playing in bands along the shore of his native New Jersey—Tom discovered advertising and design and immediately knew he'd found his calling. He has since been making brands and campaigns memorable and meaningful for far longer than he cares to think about.
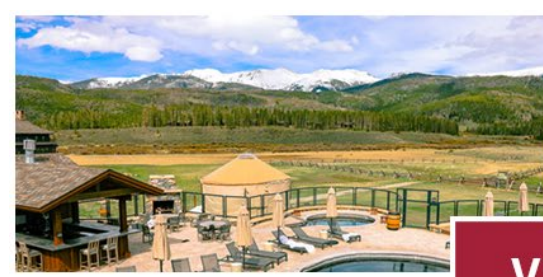
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Blake Thelen, AOR: Blake keeps projects running smoothly between the client and AOR's internal team. From the start of a project through launching deliverables, he will keep clients on a tight timeline and help identify additional marketing needs. A native of Nebraska with 12 years of both agency side and internal marketing experience, Blake has worked on numerous accounts ranging from the hospitality industry to higher education.

Tom Hägglöf, AOR: Tom brings the client's brand to life with the right words for the right idea. At a time when people are reading less and less, he's a firm believer in 'less is more' and always strives to make every word count. Having grown up in Sweden and spent his adult life in the states, Tom has his feet planted firmly on both sides of the Atlantic. He spent the early years of his career honing his skills in New York City's agency world and holds a degree in communications from Boston University.

Ainsley Weliver, AOR: Ainsley throws herself into her work connecting brands with consumers online. She's thrilled to be taking her SEO & PPC knowledge from the commercial & residential lighting industry to agency life at AOR. To her, digital marketing is the perfect blend of analytics, deep thinking, and her truest passion, creativity.

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Session 4: How to Use Generative AI for   3:15 pm – 4:30 pm
Strategic Planning   High Lonesome Barn
Greg Oates, MMGY NextFactor

How to Use Generative AI for Strategic Planning: There's so much buzz around ChatGPT, Google Bard, Microsoft Bing, Claude.ai and other new generative AI technologies, but what is their real potential? It's a lot more than writing press releases. This session will show how to use AI to enhance travel industry strategy in any given area of destination marketing and management. It will also discuss how brands are developing AI platforms to engage consumers and drive purchase decisions in new ways, and how our industry needs to adapt.