

WHERE SOUL LIVES



2017

**SALES &
MARKETING PLAN**

macon
where soul lives

VISION STATEMENT 2017

Visitors experience Where Soul Lives.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the MBCCVB is to unify and lead our community in marketing the Macon Bibb County area as a superior visitor and meeting destination.

Convention Sales Industry Trends

Source: American Express Meetings & Events 2016 Forecast

- **85% of planners indicate that they will plan either the same or more meetings:** Meetings for training and internal team meetings emerge as a predominant area of growth in the coming year. Meeting planners also expect an increase in the size of meetings for 2016. Meeting length is predicted to remain unchanged with an average of 2.3 days per meeting.
- **Budgets are growing:** Overall spending on meetings is expected to grow with an average jump of 1.9%, however, most planners acknowledge that the increase may not be enough to keep pace with hotel and air-fare rates.
- **Lead times for booking is still short:** With the exception of very large meetings, most meetings will maintain short booking lead times.
- **Use of Third Party Meeting Planners:** There is an increasing trend toward outsourcing of meeting management and planning where companies keep one account manager in a leadership role, but the meeting planning team is being outsourced.

Source: 2013 DMAI Convention Sales and Marketing Activities Study

- **Service is the new sales:** Destinations offering services and support to differentiate themselves from their competition. DMOs offer a wide array of attendance marketing support and on site services. These services and support, however, are more apt to be offered selectively than on a universal basis. Welcome desks/hospitality are the most common services offered followed closely by meet and greet services, attending the previous year's event to promote the destination, and public relations media assistance.
- **Online and Social Media:** Both have become part of the convention services landscape with social media messages to attendees during the event, and mobile apps or microsites for delegates.
- **Sales Missions and Sales Calls:** Both forms of customer interaction are seeing a resurgence in emphasis.
- **Industry Trade Shows:** Meeting industry trade shows are reported as the top lead generators for destinations.

- **Third Party Companies:** Partnerships with third party planning companies are becoming more common as corporations and associations outsource their meeting planning needs.
- **Universal emphasis on performance reporting:** Measures and metrics are being incorporated into goal-setting for sales personnel, with an emphasis on room nights and occupancy levels as the most common measurement along with direct spending generated by DMO bookings.

Source: Macon-Bibb CVB FY 2016 Actual Bookings

- 44% of meetings have under 50 attendees, 44% have up to 300 attendees, and 7% have over 1000 attendees.
- 70% of meetings are between 1-3 days in duration; 30% use hotel rooms for 4 or more days.
- Pricing and service are the top two consideration factors for a meeting location.

Source: CBRE Hotels' Americas Research Hotel Horizons Report- March 2016

- Although the U.S. lodging industry is forecast to achieve another all-time record occupancy level in 2016, there are an increasing number of local markets that are showing the effects of growing competition from new supply in a particular area.
- The demand for lodging accommodations is projected to expand in all 59 Hotel Horizons markets in both 2016 and 2017. Any hint of a slowdown can be attributed to the influence of the new supply, which is to be expected given where we are at in the lodging cycle.

Source: Smith Travel Report - March 2016 - 2017

- For 2016, the U.S. hotel industry is predicted to report a 0.6% increase in occupancy, a 4.4% rise in average daily rate and a 5.% increase in revenue per available room. During that same period, demand growth (+2.3%) is expected to outweigh supply growth (+1.7%). For 2017, STR projects the U.S. hotel industry to post a 0.2% increase in occupancy, a 4.3% rise in ADR and a 4.5% increase in RevPar. Also in 2017, demand growth is once again expected to be higher than supply growth.

Group Tour Industry Trends

Source: *AARP Travel Research: 2016 Travel Trends*

- **99% of Boomers will travel** both domestically and internationally in 2016 with approximately 4-5 trips.
- **One of the most significant trends is multi-gen family travel** - Parents, children and grandparents
- **They indicate three primary drivers for their travel:** Spending time with family and friends, relax and rejuvenate, or to get away from normal everyday life. Boomers are not particularly concerned with budgeting for personal travel, nor are they hindered by the higher airfares.
- **Final locations are equally likely to be a city, a beach or on a cruise.**
- **Social Media plays a very small role in influencing or occupying this older generation:** Two-thirds of Baby Boomers say they will NOT post to a social media site while on vacation. The vast majority (83%) will stay connected to the outside world by keeping up with the news via TV or online.

Source: *Frommers.com - Trends in Travel 2016*

- **Wellness Travel:** Wellness travel has evolved to include yoga retreats, spas, adventure travel. It may be a shift in mind-set leading vacationers to pick trips they think will add to their mental and/or physical well-being.
- **Experiential Travel:** Many in the travel industry feel that travelers, especially Millennials, are gravitating to trips that revolve around interpersonal exchanges rather than checking famous sights off a bucket list. They appreciate and prefer experiential travel - having unique experiences, experiencing a destination like a local or seeking a secondary city as a destination.
- **Discounts on Guided Bus Tours:** People who used to take mass market bus tours are deciding that they prefer vacations on which they only have to unpack once, so they're choosing river cruises instead.

Targeted Markets

Conventions:

Geographic target markets for conventions are Georgia, North and South Carolina, Tennessee, and North Florida.

- **Associations** - Expand market to Southeast regional associations, targeting those headquartered in North and South Carolina, Alabama, and Florida.
- **Religious Conferences** - Focus on the larger denominations with annual meetings.
- **Government** - State meetings sourced through local government agencies
- **Sports** - Target high school, college, and regional sporting events.
- **Corporate** - Focus on corporations based in the Southeast.

Industry Association Memberships:

GSAE - Georgia Society for Association Executives

GAMPI - Georgia Meeting Professionals International

GEORGIA SPORTS - Coalition of Georgia CVBs marketing together for sporting events

RCMA - Religious Conference Managers Association/ Rejuvenate

PCMA - Professional Conference Managers Association

NCBMP - National Coalition of Black Meeting Professionals

NASC - National Association of Sports Commissions

Convention Competition:

One of the issues in remaining competitive with other cities, both locally and regionally, is that of facility condition. The current condition of our city auditorium is improving, and we look forward to its completed renovation. However, a pressing issue is the condition of the convention center and arena. As new and remodeled facilities in competing cities come online, our market share will continue to suffer losses of long-time customers.

City	Exhibit	Breakouts	Hotel Rooms/ Walking Distance	Hotel Rooms in City
Macon	30,000 sq. ft.	16	220	5,000
Athens	56,000 sq. ft.	35	185	2,300
Augusta	37,700 sq. ft.	30	372	6,000
Columbus	182,000 sq. ft.	27	177	3,200
Jekyll Island	100,000 sq. ft.	11	187	1,100
Gwinnett	50,000 sq. ft.	23	143	10,900
Savannah	100,000 sq. ft.	13	400	14,000

At the end of Fiscal Year 2016, Macon-Bibb had lost business to Atlanta (8 meetings), Augusta (8 meetings), Columbus, Jekyll Island (2 meetings each), and Athens (5 meetings). The total room nights lost to our competition was 23,050.

***ATHENS:** Classic Center - 56,000 square feet of exhibit space, 35 breakouts, 2,053 seat theatre, similar hotel selection with 2,300 rooms. Athens has made a point of targeting conventions that are meeting in Macon with a toll of two losses of long-standing groups for the 2014-2015 fiscal year.

Competitive Edge over Macon: Facilities are newer and well maintained. Good walkability between convention center and hotel/restaurant community.

***AUGUSTA:** Marriott Convention Center 37,700 square feet of exhibit space, 30 breakouts. A better hotel selection with 6,000 rooms.

Competitive Edge over Macon: High visibility from the Masters Golf Tournament, Trade Exhibit and Event center provides more exhibit space, with twice the hotel rooms within walking distance, a few more mid-level hotels all provide a good convention package. The Riverwalk is a plus for convention attendees. Facilities are newer and well maintained.

***COLUMBUS:** Convention and Trade Center - 182,000 square feet of exhibit space, 27 breakouts, hotels include several mid-level chains with 3,200 rooms, but few within walking distance.

Competitive Edge over Macon: Refurbished and enlarged exhibit space, multiple mid-level hotels, Conference Center (Cunningham Center). New whitewater rafting project is drawing attention from many planners.

***SAVANNAH:** Trade and Convention Center - 100,000 square feet of exhibit space, 13 breakouts, multiple mid-level hotels with 14,000 rooms and 400 within walking distance.

Competitive Edge over Macon: More exhibit space and more mid-level hotels within walking distance makes a good convention package. A second luxury hotel is planned next to the Convention Center. The Riverwalk is a plus for convention attendees. Facilities are newer and well maintained.

***JEKYLL ISLAND:** Convention Center just completed. 100,000 square feet of exhibit space, 11 breakouts, smaller hotels with 1,100 rooms total. The Westin has opened along with a new Holiday Inn Resort property. A third new hotel is planned for 2017. Currently, there are 340 rooms within walking distance.

Competitive Edge over Macon: New center one hour south of Savannah in a resort area. Part of a revitalization effort for the area, the center is built with ocean views. The beautiful setting, new facilities and adequate hotel rooms within walking distance will make them a formidable competitor for state association business.

***GWINNETT COUNTY:** Gwinnett Center - 50,000 square feet of exhibit space, 23 breakouts, 700 seat theatre, similar hotels with 10,900 rooms. New Marriott puts an additional 200 rooms across the street.

Competitive Edge over Macon: More hotel choices with more mid-level hotels, more exhibit space and connected to a newer and better maintained Performing Arts Center, and Arena.

Convention Sales Objectives:

Objective 1: Book conventions, meetings and sporting events representing 19,800 room nights of which 4,000 room nights will represent new business for 2016 through 2020. Maintain and service repeat business of 15,800 room nights.

Strategy 1.1: Maintain a strong presence in the meetings industry through involvement with 7 state, regional and national associations.

Initiatives:

- Participate in 7 industry organizations; two, at the committee level.
- Sponsor events at 2 industry organizations (GaMPI, GSAE).
- Conduct 20 site tours and 5 presentations to prospective groups.

Strategy 1.2: Develop 325 prospects 150 leads, 75 bookings for 2016-2020.

Initiatives:

- Expand the local “Macon Ambassador” program, partnering with colleges, medical community, and churches in Macon-Bibb area to identify 5 new groups to prospect.
- Identify 250 prospects through industry trade shows, directories and Backyard Marketing lists.
- Sales calls and prospecting trips to Atlanta to identify 15 new meetings for Macon.

Objective 2: Coordinate six Directors of Sales meetings and two visits to hotel General Managers to foster ongoing communication with partners targeting convention and meetings business.

Strategy 2.1: Host Directors of Sales/Tourism Advisory Council bi-monthly “Lunch Club” to discuss potential business opportunities, education, trends and news from the industry.

Strategy 2.2: Schedule annual sales convention site tours of all partner properties

Strategy 2.3: Conduct semi-annual visits to GM’s to discuss trends, concerns, issues and opportunities impacting local tourism.

Targeted Markets- Group Tour:

Geographic target markets for Group Tour are Georgia, Alabama, North and South Carolina, Tennessee and North Florida.

- **Niche Groups:** Expand this growing market segment with unique experiences related to all things “local” such as foods, festivals, music, history and art. Pairing our festivals with existing tour options will help attract this market segment. We will also develop “Hub and Spoke” options for additional tour itineraries throughout Central Georgia, keeping them in Macon for additional overnights while they explore the region.
- **Senior Groups:** Grow the senior segment by increasing the customer base of church senior programs and parks and recreations department senior centers around Georgia, Alabama, North Florida and South Carolina.
- **Student Groups:** Promote to existing customers the availability of new museum attraction and university experiences. For high school groups, promote the attraction exhibits tied to Georgia curriculum standards.

Group Tour Industry Association Memberships

ABA - American Bus Association

TNMA - Tennessee Motorcoach Association

SYTA - Student & Youth Travel Association

GAMA - Georgia Motorcoach Association

Group Tour Competition:

Due to its location, Macon is becoming an “added” value destination for tour group traveling to Atlanta, Savannah, or Tennessee. Not yet considered by large operators to be a destination in itself, much of our tour development has centered around adding Macon to an existing itinerary. We will continue in that effort while adding more “day trippers” based within the state to help spread the word about the tour product in Macon. Our primary competition is Savannah and Atlanta. Both have a large tour product inventory and have well established destination awareness within the national tour industry.

SAVANNAH:

We compete with Savannah for Antebellum and Victorian home tours, cemetery tours, and festival tours. They have

more accessible product with their trolley system and strong tourism partnerships with attractions, receptive tour operators, and local destination management companies. Macon can add new experiences to existing tours going to Savannah by promoting historic homes and sites preserved.

ATLANTA:

Atlanta's primary calling card is "all that is new." Although they can boast some remarkable attractions, the traffic and high cost of touring Atlanta offers Macon unique advantages for budget conscious groups. Atlanta offers stiff competition for attraction diversity with a wide array of dining and lodging options, and culturally and historically significant venues.

Objective 1: Book 45 group tours with 1,350 tour attendees resulting in 540 room nights and develop 75 leads for 2016-2018.

Strategy 1.1: Improve Macon's group tour product awareness at six major market events.

Initiatives:

- Participate in 4 target market shows: American Bus Association, Travel South Domestic, Georgia Motor Coach Operators, and Student and Youth Travel Association.
- Co-sponsor participation with State Tourism department for two marketplace shows: National Tour Association Domestic Trade Show, Travel South International.

Strategy 1.2: Develop 150 prospects for 2016-2018.

Initiatives:

- Organize FAM for regional tour operators.
- Sales blitz current database to identify 500 target market accounts.
- Use social media network to add 10 tour operators to our contact base.
- Identify 25 prospects through industry trade shows.

*Host a FAM with GDEcD after International Pow Wow and Travel South International.

Strategy 1.3: Contact 2,000 accounts in our existing CRM database

Initiatives:

- Generate 6 e-newsletters annually to tour operator contacts in database.
- Send postcards to contacts announcing new Hub and Spoke Itineraries and special group tour offers.

Convention Services Objectives:

Objective 1: Achieve customer satisfaction score of 85%, from at least 75% of all conventions involving two or more hotels held in the current fiscal year.

Strategy 1.1: Provide servicing support for 60 conventions, meetings, reunions, and trade shows.

Initiatives:

- **Attendance Building:** Promote Macon at the group's convention prior to Macon, Social media messages and public relations support for events to local media, Sponsorship to help market events. Promote the VisitMacon app to planners and offer link on their registration page to the app to engage attendees.
- **Registration Support:** Staff convention welcome desk and provide registrars as requested.
- **Promotional Materials:** Visitor Guides, Show Your Badge discount program, VisitMacon app.
- **Group Pick-Up Documentation:** Schedule pre-con visit with hotel partners to prepare for event, Follow up to verify group's hotel usage, Compile report of rooms requested vs. actual pick-up for event history and economic impact valuation.
- **Welcome and Dignitaries:** Arrange welcome baskets, for event VIPs, Coordinate welcome by local dignitaries, Letters of invitation and/or proclamation from City officials
- **Liaison with Local Community:** Working with CVB partners, city officials, universities and local businesses to provide a roster of local speakers and subject experts for events and conventions.
- **Social Responsibility Projects:** Help connect local non-profits with event planners to arrange service-related projects for attendees of event.

Market Segments and Organizational Assignments:

Kimberly Payne-Ward, Sr. Manager Business Development

Convention Markets: Associations (except Education), Sports, Medical

TRADE SHOWS

GSAE, TEAMS

Kristen Grissom, Business Development Manager

Convention Markets: Religious, Fraternal, Education, Government, Corporate

TRADE SHOWS

RCMA, Small Market Meetings, Meetings Quest

Veronica Gruber, Tourism Sales Manager

Group Tour Markets: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Ohio and local Reunions, Weddings, Festivals

TRADE SHOWS

Student and Youth Travel Association, American Bus Association, Travel South, Travel South International

Vickia Johnson, Convention Services Coordinator

Supports all trade shows, communications, and events

Trade Shows (Convention and Group Tour):

JULY

Meeting Quest - Association, Corporate, Medical (Bloomington, MN)

AUG

Student and Youth Travel Association (SYTA)- Student Group Tours (Orlando)

SEPT

TEAMS - Sports Events (Atlantic City, NJ)

OCT

Small Market Meetings - Association, Education, Religious, Fraternal (Huntsville, AL)

NOV

Georgia Society of Association Executives Expo - GA. Associations (1-day/Atlanta)

NOV

Travel South International - Group Tour (Atlanta, GA)

JAN

American Bus Association - Group Tour (Cleveland, OH)

FEB

Religious Conference Managers Association - Religious (Chicago, IL)

MAR

Travel South Domestic Showcase - Group Tour (Branson, MO)

JUNE

Georgia Society of Assoc. Executives Annual - GA. Associations (Macon, GA)

Leisure Sales

Industry Trends

Source: U.S. Travel Association – U.S. Travel Outlook, April 2016

- **Trip Advisor is a trusted resource for travelers:** An Oxford Economics study of international and domestic travel found that TripAdvisor's breadth of content, trusted consumer reviews and booking features not only influenced travel decisions but also generated incremental travel.
- **Leisure travel is growing:** Growth in the travel sector of the U.S. economy remained positive despite a continuing decline in business travel, thanks to a consistently strong domestic leisure travel market, according to the latest Travel Trends Index (TTI).

Source: The State of the American Traveler: Destination Analysis - January 2016

- Regional Travel is growing: Who Will Travel More in 2016 - 37.8% more people from the Southeast region will travel.
- Overnight trips are common for leisure travelers: 45% of American leisure travelers took only overnight trips during 2016.
- Shorter distance for trips are popular: 36% of the average 4.4 total trips taken were 200 or fewer miles from home making them regional trips.
- Budget for travel is increasing: The average traveler said they could budget as much as \$3,445 for leisure travel this year, up 7% from one year ago.
- User-generated reviews of hotels, and social media are a trusted resource: 27.3% of travelers used user-generated reviews of hotels to help plan their leisure travel trips. However, 30.8% used Facebook to plan their leisure travel.

Source: American Express Spending & Saving Tracker

- **Vacation planning is at a high:** Americans plan to save more in the New Year, they also expect to splurge on certain experiences like travel. With 70% expecting to travel for leisure in 2016, up significantly from 66% in 2015.
- **Domestic travel continues to be the most popular form of vacationing** (55% vs. 52% in 2015) compared to international travel (28% vs. 24% in 2015). Other trips Americans plan to take are road trips (47% on par with 2015), beach vacations, and cruises.

Leisure Travel Objectives:

Objective 1: Increase leisure travel traffic in Visitor Information Centers (VIC) by 2%, through efforts to entice leisure travelers in feeder states and travelling through Georgia to visit Macon.

Strategy 1.1: Participate in Georgia on My Mind Day at the four state-run visitor information centers generating the most traffic to Macon – Tallapoosa, Augusta, Ringgold, and Savannah.

Strategy 1.2: Promote 3 new tour itineraries by offering visitors self-guided tour maps, and sample itineraries online.

Strategy 1.3: Increase members' participation at I-75 Visitor Information Center to 12 participants for Macon on My Mind Day.

Strategy 1.4: Communicate Georgia on My Mind opportunities in 4 partner e-newsletters.

Strategy 1.5: Collaborate with the Marketing Department to increase online traffic by 2%.

Objective 2: Provide Sales training for Visitor Information Specialists, in order to increase aRes attraction and hotel bookings by 3%.

Strategy 2.1: Create a Sales manual, specifically providing guidance on enhancing the visitor experience, phone call sales etiquette, and utilizing VisitMacon.org.

Strategy 2.2: Provide updates to staff on tourism offerings and product changes during quarterly meetings and also communicate leisure travel sales results and recent trends.

Objective 3: Promote the I Am Macon program to identified target markets. Provide 10 training sessions and two customized sessions to train 250 Tourism Ambassadors.

Strategy 3.1: Solicit 3 local hotels, to conduct an abbreviated I Am Macon session.

Strategy 3.2: Keep Tourism Ambassadors informed of superior customer service strategies, and tourism happenings by sending out 3 e-newsletters per year.

Objective 4: Generate \$12,000 in retail revenue at the Downtown Visitors Information Center.

Strategy 4.1: Add new merchandise according to buying trends of visitors.

Strategy 4.2: Advertise monthly the gift shop on the Deals and Packages page of the Macon-Bibb County Convention & Visitors Bureau website, social media websites, e-newsletters to leisure travelers, and coupons distributed at the I-75 VIC.

Strategy 4.3: Invite 3 local artisans to showcase their product in the Downtown Visitors Center; further increasing our retail product selection to include Macon made items.

Objective 5: Promote attractions, restaurants, and hotels through Leisure Travel e-newsletter four times per year.

Strategy 5.1: Leisure Travel e-newsletter will be distributed to CVB leisure travellers database in September, December, February and April.

Strategy 5.2: Leisure Travel e-newsletter will include the following topics:

Seasonal Headers	Top Attractions
What's new in Macon	Promotions- hotel, retail, attractions, restaurants
Upcoming events for the 3-4 month window	Links to Macon Travel Guide
Guided Tour Information	New collateral announcements as needed

Marketing and Membership

Industry Trends

Source: DMAI Top Destination Marketing Trends To Look Out For in 2016, January 2016

- **Expansion of Social Media Advertising:** We can no longer look at Facebook as an organic channel. Smart marketers realize with a modest investment that their Facebook audience can be activated for engagement and site traffic. Add to that the new accessibility to Instagram advertising and marketers should be hitting up their bosses for more money.
- **DMO Websites Are Meant to Inspire:** DMO websites play a far more influential role “inspiring” prospective visitors than converting their interest to bookings. Hence, destination websites should be designed and marketed primarily to inspire prospective visitors, as travelers are much more likely to default to other options when actually making reservations.
- **Cultivating Digital Influencers for Your Destination:** More than ever, consumer loyalties belong to influential online personalities. It takes time and energy to identify an influencer whose coverage aligns seamlessly with your destination’s messaging, but the resulting endorsement is invaluable.
- **User-Generated Content (UGC) Platforms:** Integrating and automating user-generated content (UGC) platforms. We’re seeing more and more clients not only utilizing UGC, but utilizing systems to moderate and measure consumer engagement to ultimately boost their impact.
- **Content Over Campaigns:** Campaigns are clever, but content is compelling. Campaigns are usually time-sensitive with starting and ending dates, and in order for them to work, they have to be really good in order to break through the clutter. But the problem with campaigns is that consumers see right through them, and they add no value. Content, on the other hand, can add value. It actually works in all phases of the travel cycle, and is more likely to be consumed and shared. The key to being a good marketer is to always add value to the end user, so allocate your resources to create more content versus more campaigns

- **Digital Marketing Attribution:** The debate about digital marketing attribution will heat up as DMOs continue to focus more attention on accurately measuring the outcomes of their marketing efforts. Arrivals in-market are what matter most to DMOs and their stakeholders, but when it comes to driving interest, not all impressions are created equal. Wading through the various attribution models – and ensuring legitimacy and objectivity of the source – will be key to understanding the relative impacts of paid and earned impressions

Source: Top 5 Trends in Travel and Tourism Marketing That Your Brand Can't Ignore (for NTTW) Fuse Traveler, May 2016

- **Experiential Travel Continues to Evolve:** For years, there has been recognition that travelers are no longer interested in just seeing a destination. They want to experience it. We see this continuing to expand; going beyond multisensory personalized experiences, deeper into the authentic experience of a place. This type of travel is so intimate and real that it allows one to experience a local's way of life.
- **People Define a Destination:** We see the growing importance of expressing who the people of a destination are, including their cultural heritage and traditions. This dimension of the destination brand is more important than ever, and has to be developed with care and great attention to detail.
- **Content strategies for DMOs must be advanced dramatically:** We are entering an exciting new phase in content demand and opportunities, and almost universally DMOs are behind the curve. Innovative, fresh new content is perhaps the top priority for the next few years.
- **Huge new opportunities exist for group travel:** We see a link between the way people share travel experiences through social media and an opportunity for DMOs, resorts and cruise lines to cultivate new group travel business. Social Community Group Travel experiences are, we believe, highly marketable.
- **Digital, Social and Experiential Marketing:** should be the core focus of Travel and Tourism marketing. Full integration of strategies, presentation of brand and core brand messages must be executed elegantly across these channels (as well as any others).

Target Markets

- Travelers within a 4-5 hour drive radius of Macon
- **Cities:** Atlanta, Warner Robins, Savannah, Jacksonville, Birmingham, Montgomery, Greenville, SC
- **States:** Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois

Industry Association Memberships

- Brand USA
- Destination Marketing Association International
- Georgia Association of CVBs
- Southeast Tourism Society
- U.S. Travel Association
- Historic Heartland Travel Association
- Antebellum Trail

Objective 1: Implement Macon's destination and community brand.

Strategy 1.1: Implement the 2nd year initiatives of the Brand Experience Delivery plan

Objective 2: Implement comprehensive advertising plan, including partnership opportunities with the GDEcD, that targets key visitors in the leisure, meetings and group tour markets.

Strategy 2.1: Advertise in trade and leisure publication to promote Macon as a destination for leisure, meetings and group tours.

Strategy 2.2: Increase digital marketing budget by 5% to target potential visitors.

Strategy 2.3: Focus on 15 print and online publications (within a 4-5 hour radius of Macon).

Strategy 2.4: Develop new advertising creative that leverages Macon's new "Where Soul Lives" brand.

Strategy 2.5: Create annual and quarterly co-op marketing opportunities for partners to participate with various CVB promotions to generate (\$11,000) in co-op revenue.

Objective 3: Increase traffic and conversion on website and mobile site by 2%.

Strategy 3.1: Increase the use of videos on VisitMacon.org to highlight 4 key Macon experiences.

Objective 4: Increase Visitors Information Center traffic by 2%.

Strategy 4.1: Continue with our billboard campaign to promote “Where Soul Lives” and the I-75 and Downtown Visitor Information Centers.

Strategy 4.2: Promote 12 Downtown VIC promotions of gift shop merchandise on social media.

Objective 5: Increase social media followers to 20,000 on Facebook, 3,250 followers on Twitter, 500 LinkedIn connections and 500 Instagram followers.

Strategy 5.1: Use analytics on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn to measure what users define as their top interests, locations and peak times of page engagement.

Strategy 5.2: Promote Macon on the VisitMacon.org blog with 45 new entries.

Objective 6: Increase partnership revenue to \$25,000.

Strategy 6.1: Continue to educate CVB Member-Partners on the revised Macon CVB Partnership model, which provides 2 levels for CVB membership and moved membership billing cycles to either January or July.

Strategy 6.2: Continue offering Marketing Training Sessions for CVB partners on various marketing tools and opportunities quarterly.

Communications & Public Relations

Industry Trends

Source: Forbes.com PR Trends You Need To Know In 2016

The traditional press release is no more.

The age of the standard press release is no more. Rather than trying to gain media coverage through ineffective press releases of a time gone by, it's critical for PR professionals and marketers to embrace new and different ways of getting news about our offerings and accomplishments to our audience members. Take advantage of social media, develop relationships with industry leaders and Influencers, and incorporate quality visuals in your messages to get the attention of journalists and outlets that can help you spread your message.

True influence will win over number of followers.

It's ultimately better to have a slightly smaller, higher-quality network that loves your brand and content than it is to have a larger one with no engagement. Focus on developing a network and building influence among a targeted, valuable audience and social following to stay ahead in 2016.

Use of paid promotion and social ads will continue to rise.

According to the Content Marketing Institute's 2016 content benchmark report, more than 50 percent of B2B marketing professionals use social ads and promoted posts to distribute content, and the effectiveness ratings for each of these methods have increased since last year. This means more marketers and communications professionals are turning to paid social efforts, and those efforts are seeing higher and higher returns. To keep up, communications professionals should look for new ways to invest in paid social distribution and reach new audiences.

Source: BizJournals.com 5 Public Relations Trends to Watch for in 2016

Content will become more searchable and more uniform

Many PR professionals feel that instead of sharing the same content across all media levels, it's better to succinctly tailor messages to particular audiences (traditional media versus social). However, the key to winning in 2016 is not in creating diverse content, but instead, building uniform storylines of content, complete with rich, searchable notes. Because people have limitless choices, they do not spend enormous amounts of time across all media channels, but instead, cherry-pick a small handful they find most useful based upon their lifestyles and needs. Search and content are merging. News, information and responses now move at viral speed with connected search terms and hashtags. To maintain proper messaging across all forms of media, content must be uniform. This means the focus is no longer on tailoring the message, but streamlining a uniform message and tailoring search terms for maximum impact.

Storytelling will be key to building relationships

Too often, when people consider the value of PR, they focus exclusively on fast-turn media hits or crisis communications. What many fail to consider is the value of storytelling. Storytelling is actually what PR professionals do best, and in an era of multi-level media, businesses should be considering the development of detailed, finely woven and creative stories to be shared over time.

Blogosphere becomes stratosphere

Traditional media continues to be an important element of any PR campaign. However, a growing reliance on social media has prompted creation of micro campaigns that oftentimes net greater results. These campaigns, uniquely targeted to blogs and vlogs, are cost-efficient and successful given highly specified audiences. The digital era has given rise to limitless blogs, which continue to remain a virtually untapped realm for positive word-of-mouth and viral social sharing. PR professionals are therefore sitting at a veritable buffet of opportunity to enhance client profile simply by playing in the blogosphere.

Media will be redefined as “any access point where people receive news or information”

In the past, media fell into a few main categories — print, wire and broadcast. Today, media outlets are completely redefined. Of all our predictions, this one is by far the most important: Media outlets can now be defined as any gateway through which people receive news or information — whether traditional print or broadcast, social media, blogs, feeds or even mobile devices. There is now complete transparency between respected, fact-based journalism and more prevalent citizen journalism. Social media has given rise to an era where many place value in the opinions of strangers and many of us complain that once respected news outlets have become sell-outs. PR professionals must understand that media is no longer easily segmented or controlled. Every gateway is both an opportunity and a challenge. PR people will therefore be held more accountable not only for what is delivered, but also how it is received across diverse gateways.

Measurement continues to evolve

Last year, we predicted that data measurement would be critical for PR success however, the tide is shifting. Social media platforms that once shared this information free of charge are now limiting what you receive for free, and will begin charging for said data. Today, buying decisions are not based on advertisements. Available company information in the form of news or feature articles and customer reviews are how consumers make decisions. That fact alone highlights the importance of PR as well as customer relationships.

What motivates each of us to scroll through social media or news sites? What are the stories that ultimately lead to action? Ironically, the action itself will again become the star metric by which businesses will be forced to evaluate success. Social media campaigns that encourage tagging, re-tweeting, sharing, etc. will showcase one metric, but sales figures, sign-ins or subscriptions will be necessary to support the digital metrics previously used to evaluate engagement and content value. We predict that measurement in general will become a massive focus as many struggle to locate APIs or third-party solutions to evaluate campaign reach and effectiveness.

Targeted PR Markets

- Freelance Travel Writers
- Local Media
- Regional and National Media

Association Memberships

- Public Relations Society of America (National & Georgia)
- Society of American Travel Writers

Objective 1: Increase awareness of Macon as a tourism destination through 30 pitched travel stories.

Strategy 1.1: Target 15 trade and leisure publications for story pitches specific to targeted markets.

Strategy 1.2: Pitch 30 stories based on content themes.

Objective 2: Increase the number of media articles, press visits, and research assistance to 90.

Strategy 2.1: Utilize Meltwater media monitoring service to prospect for 60 new media contacts.

Strategy 2.2: Host 5 media FAMs to promote Macon tourism offerings.

eNewsletter Content Calendar

Partner Newsletter

September, December, March June

Convention Newsletter

December, February, April

Group Tour Newsletter

September, November, January, February, May, July

Leisure Newsletter

September, January, April, June

“I Am Macon” Newsletter

April, June, November

Legislative Newsletter

August, January

Social Media General

Content Themes:

JULY

Family Travel, Georgia Restaurant Week, National Hot Dog Month, National Ice Cream Month

AUG

Back to School, Family Travel, National Peach Month

SEPT

Native American History, Football

OCT

Haunted Sites and Sights, Homecoming, National Pizza Month, National Apple Month

NOV

Thanksgiving Travel, Homecoming, Holiday Shopping, Christmas Made in the South, National Native American Heritage Month, National Georgia Pecan Month

DEC

Holiday Travel Planning

JAN

Resolutions, Outdoor Activities, Family History, Live Entertainment

FEB

Black History, Wedding Planning, Films, National Cherry Month

MAR

Festivals, Farmer’s Markets, National Peanut Month

APRIL

Outdoor Recreation, Trials, National Park Week, National Pecan Month

MAY

Colleges and Universities, National Travel and Tourism Week, Gardens, National Barbecue Month, National Strawberry Month

JUNE

Music and Culture, Water Activities, Summer Camps, Antique and Flea Markets