

The 2015 – 2019 Meet AC Applied Strategic Plan

Prepared for



by

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November 2014

Executive Summary

Graduate students in the TSTD 6297 Advanced Topical Studies course at The George Washington University developed an Applied Strategic Plan (ASP) after selecting Meet AC as the client. Meet AC, a 501(c) (6) organization, is a tourism economic development agency formed to assist Atlantic City in its efforts to diversify its customer base.

The highlights of the ASP include the following:

- The critical issue facing Atlantic City, New Jersey which is the significant decline in tourism. The decline has led to the closure of several casino hotels creating financial ailments for the city.
- The key reasons Atlantic City should reposition itself in the tourism industry as a robust and diversified destination.
- Objectives and key Critical Success Indicators (CSIs) identified as recommendations to incorporate measures to expand the meeting, convention and group market of Atlantic City, New Jersey.
- CSIs which will be used to help Meet AC to track the progress of its goals toward success.
- A performance audit incorporating a detailed analysis of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT).
- Action recommendations to incorporate measures to expand the meeting, convention and group market of Atlantic City, New Jersey.
- The initial steps in the implementation process of the 2015-2019 Meet AC Applied Strategic Plan as it relates to the objectives for each of the identified CSIs.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Organizational Overview

Meet AC is a newly formed non-profit sales organization tasked with expanding the meeting, convention and group market of Atlantic City, New Jersey (conventions and meetings make up less than 10 percent of the Atlantic City's revenue). Meet AC's goals include extending their reach nationally and establishing Meet AC as a trusted brand in the Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions (MICE) industry.

A major challenge Meet AC faces is the city itself. Atlantic City is a financially ailing resort city, which has seen a significant decrease in tourism. Meet AC is optimistic that their assertive efforts toward attracting meeting and convention business will contribute significantly to the city's financial gains and thus reestablish Atlantic City as a renowned destination.

1.2 Critical Issue

The critical issue facing Atlantic City, New Jersey is the significant decline in tourism, which has led to the closure of several casino hotels including the Atlantic Club Casino Hotel, Showboat Atlantic City, Revel Casino Hotel, Trump Plaza Hotel and Casino and soon the Trump Taj Mahal Casino Hotel. These closures have contributed considerably to the financial ailments the city is currently facing. If tourism continues to decline, the ripple effect of these closures will result in the loss of additional business ventures such as tourist attractions, restaurants, transportation and banking. Additionally, the ripple effect could lead to a greater loss, the identity of the city and its citizens. It is essential that Atlantic City reposition itself in the tourism industry as a robust and diversified destination. To accomplish this, Atlantic City should shift its focus from the gaming market to the meetings and conventions market, which has broader appeal and one, which is thriving in other resort cities such as Las Vegas, Nevada. Atlantic City is home to Boardwalk Hall and the Atlantic City Convention Center, venues that are located within the resort city, and which offer amenities travelers / planners seek. These two venues are great starting points toward accomplishing Meet AC's goals. The plans hope is to leverage such venues, amenities and the city to escalate the growth of the meetings and conventions market in Atlantic City, which in turn will establish the city as a sought after destination for meetings and conventions and will provide financial stability to the city and its citizens.

2.0 Values Scan

2.1 Organizational Structure and Culture

Meet AC began operations on April 28, 2014, and is funded by the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority (CRDA). The annual budget will be \$8 million beginning July 1. Meet AC, Inc. was founded on June 23, 2014 as a 501(c) (6) organization.

The organization consists of a five-member board of directors and a staff of 26 full-time equivalent employees. As illustrated in Appendix 12.1, the titles of the full-time positions include President / CEO, Director of Finance, Accounting Clerk, Vice President of Sales, Director of Sales, National Accounts Director, National Sales Manager, Sales Manager, Leisure Group Sales Manager, Marketing / IT Manager, Communications Manager, Sales Assistant, Director of Convention Services, Convention Services Coordinator, and Convention Services Manager.

Meet AC has a flat, functional organizational structure with fewer levels between front line employees who work directly with customers and upper management. Most importantly, Meet AC encourages, celebrates and believes in the value of diversity. Also, Meet AC values and respects individual differences and perspectives, and fosters teamwork to provide fair and equal treatment to all employees in the organization. Additionally, the culture of Meet AC is focused on its vision and strong organizational culture with policies and procedures that guide all employees while providing a sense of direction and order at work.

2.2 Stakeholders and their Values

The major stakeholders include but are not limited to the following:

- Hotels: To book / sell / house meeting space and sleeping rooms for the meetings, conventions, gambling and family-friendly target audience.
- Casino Hotels and Casino Owners: To promote its amenities in an effort to bring in new and repeat business to increase economic activity in the city as well as to cease further casino hotel closures.
- Atlantic City Convention Center: To assist with making a significant increase in tourism within the city to further market and promote Atlantic City as a sought after destination for meetings, conventions, and family-friendly events.
- Boardwalk Hall: To effectively use this venue to sell the city to perspective clients from near and afar.
- Restaurants and Retail: To bring economic activity into the city in an effort to create jobs and financial stability to the city and its citizens.
- Casino Reinvestment Development Authority: To further support Meet AC as it works to attract more meetings and conventions to Atlantic City.
- State of New Jersey: To collaborate with Meet AC to reposition the city to the diversified target market.

- Citizens / Residents of Atlantic City: To utilize the meeting spaces and hotels in addition to serving as a support system that will welcome the meetings and convention business to the city.
- The City of Atlantic City: To promote the city as the premiere meeting and convention destination to create a strong economic impact throughout the city. To reposition itself in the tourism industry.
- Potential meeting and convention groups: To bring repeat and new business to the area.
- Media: To further promote and focus advertising and public relations outreach through radio, cable TV, magazines, and or digital advertising campaigns.
- Meet AC and its internal staff: Create destination marketing / sales staff that will prove to be more nimble and more effective as well as promote Atlantic City as the place to have meetings and conventions.

2.3 Mission Statement

Meet AC's purpose and strategic directions are based on its mission statement, which is to create enhanced visitor spending and economic impact through attracting meetings, conventions, and families to Atlantic City. Meet AC's vision is to become a preeminent resort destination sales and marketing organization focusing on the meeting & convention markets.

The strategic goals of Meet AC include the following:

- To market the awareness of the meeting capabilities of Atlantic City;
- To formulate and implement targeted meeting sales strategies;
- To identify qualified meeting/convention sales leads;
- To convert meeting/convention sales leads to new business; and
- To provide value added meeting/convention services.

3.0 Environmental Scan

3.1 Internal Environment

Meet AC's internal environment presents a congenial, collaborative and supportive spirit that thrives on employee contributions. Employees at every level embrace the spirit. Meet AC's internal environment fosters creativity, promotes excellence, and rewards actions and results.

3.2 Competitive Environment

Meet AC's competitive environment is fierce. Atlantic City is recognized as the gaming capital of the east coast; however, it is not recognized as a popular meeting destination. Meet AC competes with renowned meeting destinations such as Chicago, Illinois, Orlando, Florida, Las Vegas, Nevada, Atlanta, Georgia, San Diego, California, New York, New York, Dallas, Texas, Washington, D.C., New Orleans, Louisiana, and Nashville, Tennessee. These destinations are well grounded and resource rich. These destinations boast a reputable and distinguishable presence in the industry. Their statuses as primer destinations present a fierce competitive edge over Atlantic City.

3.3 Industry Environment

The meeting industry remains at the forefront of global economic growth. The progressive reach of social media and the Internet has transformed the business arena and the global marketplace including the meeting industry. Now more than ever, global businesses seek meetings as invaluable resources fortifying partnerships and stimulating growth. The meeting industry is recognized as a driving force of global economic growth. The continued growth of the meeting industry is promising.

3.4 Macro Environment

The macro environment (tourism industry) in which Meet AC operates has seen advances that support expansion and growth of the tourism industry. Such advances include the introduction of the Tourism Promotion Act of the United States in 2009. Legislation such as this renews the validity of the industry, fortifies the industry and fosters growth and innovation. The global marketplace's embrace of tourism as an economic driver authenticates the industry and distinguishes it from other industries. However, the macro environment is volatile. Organizations such as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), terrorist acts and the very recent Ebola scare present alarming challenges and threats to the overall tourism industry. These challenges and threats can lead to devastating effects on the tourism industry such as those seen during the years following the terrorist acts of September 11.

3.5 Driving Forces

The major driving forces in order of importance include:

1. Market Needs
 - a. This will guide Meet AC to develop products or services for a particular market segment. This force uses constant feedback like surveys and market analysis reports to produce data on what attracts the segment visitor.
2. Products / Services Offered
 - a. This will widen existing markets and penetrate new ones with products and services similar to those developed before.
3. Natural Resources
 - a. Meet AC can continue to market products supplied by nature (Ex. Atlantic City's beach and oceanfront).

4.0 Strategic Business Modeling

4.1 Desired Future

As stated previously, the critical issue facing Atlantic City, New Jersey is the significant decline in tourism, which has led to the closure of several casino hotels. These closures have contributed considerably to the financial ailments the city is facing. As a result, Meet AC's desired future as it relates to the aforementioned critical issue is to develop a five-year applied strategic plan focused on increasing and attracting meeting and convention business to Atlantic City. Not only will the plan incorporate measures to expand the meeting, convention and group market of Atlantic City, New Jersey but it will establish Meet AC as a trusted and renowned brand in the Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions (MICE) industry at least three years out.

4.2 Critical Success Indicators

The Critical Success Indicators (CSIs) listed below will help Meet AC to track the progress of its goals toward success and to identify which goals need to be adjusted, if any.

Number of Bookings:

- Increase room nights to 300,000 annually by booking groups, meetings and large conventions at least three years out
- Empower convention sales staff to book an additional 20 events per year at Atlantic City Convention Center and nearby hotels

Market Expansion:

- Bring in 20% - 40% of convention market to Atlantic City on the weekends
- Increase meeting and convention market in Atlantic City to generate business for workers, local hotels, restaurants, and shops
- Bring visitors and meeting planners to Atlantic City via public transportation, airlines, or accessible roadways
- Develop a marketing plan to turn the casino gaming and meeting / convention space into the preferred destination

Increase Revenue:

- Drive more non-gamblers, ~~and~~ visitors, and families to Atlantic City
- Increase economic impact from visitors and meetings / convention attendees by eating, staying and shopping locally
- Increase non-gaming revenues such as hotels, food, beverage, etc. by 15%
- Increase visitor spending by 10%

Public Relations and Advertisement:

- Promote the Boardwalk and shops in place of gaming activities
- Advertise in target publications for the meetings and convention audience
- Increase stronger online presence

5.0 Performance Audit

5.1 SWOT Analysis

5.1.1 Strengths

- Atlantic City, an attractive central location, offers exceptional exposure to casino, boardwalk, beach visitors and shopping
- Atlantic City, known as one of the largest conference centers in New Jersey, is home to Boardwalk Hall and the Atlantic City Convention Center
- 26 full-time knowledgeable sales staff who serve as ambassadors of the Meet AC brand
- Strong, committed president and CEO with excellent fiscal and budget management skills
- Strong customer service philosophy and organizational culture
- Financial resources
- Existing tourism infrastructure (beaches, boardwalk, shops and convention center / exhibition hall)
- Affordable hotel rates
- Convention Center has 486,600 square feet of exhibit space and 8,000 committable hotel rooms with a total of 20,000 rooms in Atlantic City Convention Center hotels
- Convention Center is less than 20 minutes from Atlantic City International Airport, and shuttle service provides easy transportation for guests
- Atlantic City is easily accessible by air, New Jersey Transit, rail or road and is within a day's drive of 1/3 of America's population
- \$1 million meeting planner incentives program available

5.1.2 Weaknesses

- Perceptions of crime is significant deterrent to commerce and investments in the city
- Less family oriented
- Reputation is tarnished by the number of recent casino closures
- Hotels sell out to gambling customers on the weekends
- Atlantic City faces fierce competition from renowned travel destinations such as Chicago, Illinois, Las Vegas, Nevada and Orlando, Florida
- Limited reach in the meeting industry
- Meet AC's fairly recent formation and introduction to the meeting industry

5.1.3 Opportunities

- Emphasize non-gaming, resort-oriented amenities such as spas, nightclubs, entertainment venues, restaurants and shops
- Attract regular, major airline service at Atlantic City International Airport, which has the aviation infrastructure to support considerable growth
- Establish itself as a premier meeting destination that affords a wealth of opportunities for business development including personal services that target travelers
- Generate awareness by branding, marketing, and reestablishing Atlantic City as a meetings and convention destination locally, regionally and nationally
- Reposition itself as both a family and meeting destination so Atlantic City can tap the leisure market
- Potential to be known as the meeting and convention place of choice because NJ gas prices are considered relatively low in comparison to other states
- Close proximity to major meeting generating markets (including Washington, DC with all of its associations)
- Book 300,000 room nights annually to generate a positive economic impact
- Bring in 20% - 40% of convention market on the weekend
- Legislative support from Governor Christie's summit on the state of Atlantic City
- Stronger online presence including a website with information about Meet AC

5.1.4 Threats

- Atlantic City's 30-year monopoly on gambling has been shattered throughout the past several years as states such as Pennsylvania, New York, Maryland, and Delaware opened casinos in the heart of the city's customer base in pursuit for new sources of revenue
- Increased tolls on the roadway infrastructure serving Atlantic City
- Influx of visitors may present a threat to demand of city services and its roads and highways and to the natural environment
- Limited flights into Atlantic City International Airport
- Closure of several hotels in city hinders the bigger conventions from taking place
- External environment (Ex. Ebola, weather, etc.)

5.2 Gap Analysis

Meet AC's organizational culture is congenial, collaborative and supportive. The culture fosters creativity, promotes excellence, and recognizes and rewards actions and results. The gap in Meet AC's organizational culture is time. Meet AC is relatively young, established in 2013, the organization has not been in business long enough to conclude whether their culture will withstand changes in leadership and expansion.

In terms of human resources, Meet AC employs 25 employees in varying capacities. These employees are tasked with transforming Atlantic City as a premier and renowned meeting destination. The gap in the area of human resources lies in the degree to which employees embrace the organizational culture, the mission and goals and driving force of the overall organization and their loyalty to the organization.

Similar to the organizational culture, the gap of the corporate structure of Meet AC is the passage of time. Meet AC's corporate structure requires time to fortify the foundation in which it is seeded. A strong and fortified corporate structure is essential for the attainment of Meet AC's goals and objectives and affirmation of Meet AC as a reputable and viable organization.

In the area of innovation, the gap Meet AC will need to overcome is the degree of creativity and the amount of resources allocated to develop innovative service offerings that surpass the competition.

Meet AC has a clear and strong grasp on the number of risks and challenges they face particularly with the competitive market. Meet AC's resolve to face challenges head-on and aggressively is admirable. However, the gap in orientation toward risk lies in the degree Meet AC can respond and sustain momentum in challenging and risky situations.

Meet AC's ambitious goals are evidence of their capacity for proactive futuring. The gap lies in the speculation / identification of market and industry trends. Meet AC's future relies on implementation and development of revolutionary practices.

The gap in Meet AC's competitive stance is wide due to volatile situation of Atlantic City. Additionally, Meet AC has yet to establish firmly its reputation as a competitive organization in the meetings industry.

6.0 Action Strategy

6.1 Alternative Strategies

Meet AC's corporate structure requires time to fortify the foundation in which it is seeded. A strong and fortified corporate structure is essential for the attainment of Meet AC's goals and objectives and affirmation of Meet AC as a reputable and viable organization. Alternative solutions were considered to address each of the identified gaps. The solutions were in turn evaluated based on the pros and cons of each, and recommendations were prepared as to which solution would be the most suitable for Meet AC. The results of this procedure are shown in the table below.

Alternative Action Strategies	Pros	Cons
Subscribe / join leading industry associations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Membership / association with professional industry associations lends credence to the organization's reputation• Access to industry professionals in various sectors and varying levels• Association's code of ethics is a motivation toward excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Membership fees can be costly• Staff participation in association meetings and activities can be time consuming• Membership dependent on association's reputation and code of ethics• Membership may benefit staff member more than organization
Partnership with similar organization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reputation and name recognition through partnership with similar organization• Access to established clientele• Opportunity to expand reach via partnering organization's contacts and associations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reliant on partnering organization's reputation and conduct• Purpose and goals diverge over time• Limited decision-making opportunities.• Loss of identity

6.2 Recommended Strategy

Meet AC has yet to establish firmly its reputation as a competitive organization in the meetings industry. To achieve recognition in the industry Meet AC should carefully consider joining leading industry associations. Active and collaborative memberships with leading associations will aid in affirming Meet AC's ethical and visionary reputation. Additionally, memberships with leading associations will present opportunities for expanding reach with

members of the target market. Staff member's participation in industry events and activities presents opportunities to reinforce professional standards and ethics, which refine and advance day-to-day operations.

6.3 Action Plan

The desired future of Meet AC is to develop a five-year applied strategic plan focused on increasing and attracting meeting and convention business to Atlantic City by repositioning itself in the tourism industry as a robust and diversified destination. The recommended strategy to reach the desired future is to establish Meet AC as a trusted and renowned brand in the Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions (MICE) industry at least three years out.

On the next four pages is an outline with four objectives and key critical success indicators (CSIs) as possible action recommendations to incorporate measures to expand the meeting, convention and group market of Atlantic City, New Jersey.

Objective	Tasks to be Performed	Timing by Month and Responsibility	Critical Success Indicators
1. To expand / increase and attract meeting and convention business to Atlantic City	1.1 Develop marketing plan to promote Atlantic City in the Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions (MICE) industry at least three years out	March 2015 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> James (Jim) Wood, President/ CEO Gary Musich, VP of Sales Mary Moliver, Director of Convention Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring in 20% - 40% of convention market to Atlantic City on the weekends Increase meeting and convention market in Atlantic City to generate business for workers, local hotels, restaurants, and shops by December 2015 Bring in at least 50 new visitors to Atlantic City via public transportation, airlines, or accessible roadways by June 2015 Develop a marketing plan to turn the casino gaming and meeting / convention space into the preferred destination by March 2015
	1.2 Develop well-trained sales workforce by developing a sales training course to carry out the mission of Meet AC	February 2015 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gary Musich, VP of Sales Sandi Harvey and Joan Mooney, Directors of Sales 	
	1.3 Develop working groups to focus on market expansion and implementation	January 2015 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> James (Jim) Wood, President/ CEO Gary Musich, VP of Sales Sandi Harvey and Joan Mooney, Directors of Sales 	
	1.4 Expand sales force to aggressively secure new and repeat business	February 2015 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> James (Jim) Wood, President/ CEO Gary Musich, VP of Sales Sandi Harvey and Joan Mooney, Directors of Sales 	
	1.5 Research current meetings and conventions that are held in Atlantic City	January 2015 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sandi Harvey and Joan Mooney, Directors of Sales 	
	1.6 Partner with Atlantic City International Airport to increase air service	March 2015 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> James (Jim) Wood, President/ CEO Mary Moliver, Director of Convention Services 	

Objective	Tasks to be Performed	Timing by Month and Responsibility	Critical Success Indicators
2. To increase the number of bookings	2.1 Conduct at least 15 cold call sales a month per Meet AC's sales team member	January – December 2015 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anne Bergen and Daniel Gallagher, National Sales Managers Laura Terrero, Sales Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase room nights to 300,000 annually by booking groups, meetings and large conventions at least three years out Empower convention sales staff to book an additional 20 events per year at Atlantic City Convention Center and nearby hotels
	2.2 Develop a loyalty program for direct bookings with a powerful call to action / incentive to businesses / groups that book outside of 3 years	March 2015 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caren Fitzpatrick, Director of Finance Sandi Harvey and Joan Mooney, Directors of Sales 	

Objective	Tasks to be Performed	Timing by Month and Responsibility	Critical Success Indicators
3. To increase revenue in Atlantic City	3.1 Monitor economic impact figures for the city on an annual basis	December 2015 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • James (Jim) Wood, President / CEO • Caren Fitzpatrick, Director of Finance • Gary Musich, VP of Sales 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drive more non-gamblers and visitors to Atlantic City • Increase economic impact from visitors and meetings / convention attendees by eating, staying and shopping locally • Increase non-gaming revenues such as hotels, food, beverage, etc. by 15% • Increase visitor spending by 10%
	3.2 Attract the leisure market (blending of leisure and business travelers) to generate an increase of overnight visitors from previous year	March 2015 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laura Terrero, Sales Manager • Heather Colache, Leisure Group Sales Manager • Anne Bergen and Daniel Gallagher, National Sales Managers 	
	3.3 Design sales goal campaign for sales team to collaboratively generate 300,000 room nights for 2016	January 2015 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gary Musich, VP of Sales • Sandi Harvey and Joan Mooney, Directors of Sales 	

Objective	Tasks to be Performed	Timing by Month and Responsibility	Critical Success Indicators
4. To generate positive brand awareness to further promote Meet AC	4.1 Develop budget for advertising campaign	January 2015 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caren Fitzpatrick, Director of Finance • Karina Makarova, Marketing / IT Manager • Gary Musich, VP of Sales 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the Boardwalk and shops in place of gaming activities • Advertise in targeted publications for the meetings and convention audience
	4.2 Develop public relations campaign	January 2015 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karina Makarova, Marketing / IT Manager • Jessica Merrill, Communications Manager 	
	4.3 Develop print and digital ad campaign focusing on the B2B and B2C	March 2015 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karina Makarova, Marketing / IT Manager • Jessica Merrill, Communications Manager 	
	4.4 Promote Atlantic City as the “East Coast’s premier seaside meeting location and popular year-round destination” in at least 5 trade publications	February 2015 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mike Reynolds, Tanya Curran, Patrick McCormick, National Accounts Directors • Anne Bergen and Daniel Gallagher, National Sales Managers • Heath Colache, Leisure Group Sales Manager • Sandi Harvey and Joan Mooney, Directors of Sales 	
	4.5 Join at least two leading industry associations to	February 2015	

	validate organization's reputation and pursue new business opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heather Colache, Leisure Group Sales Manager 	
	4.6 Market Meet AC brand consistently across social media platforms (Facebook, YouTube, website, etc.)	March 2015 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karina Makarova, Marketing / IT Manager • Jessica Merrill, Communications Manager 	

6.4 Required Resources

Resource Requirements:		
<i>Item</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Estimated Costs (if any)</i>
Staff	Meet AC staff as identified above in the responsibility column	Dedicated time Commitment \$14,000 for sales training course for Meet AC staff
Equipment	Computer, Copier, Paper	\$5,500
Marketing	Ad space cost in 5 trade publications	\$4,000
	Graphic Designer to design print and digital ads	\$3,250
	Update / enhance content on social media platforms	No cost (Meet AC's Marketing IT Manager)
Leadership Synergies Recommendations: (Refer to the complete list and descriptions in Appendix 13.2)		
Strategic Planning		\$ 20,000
Event Strategy		\$ 18,000
Lapsed Customer Research		\$ 8,000
Current Customer Research		\$ 8,000
Board of Directors Facilitation		\$ 9,000
Time and Motion Study		\$ 4,500
360-Degree Assessment		\$ 4,500
Sales Training		\$ 14,000

6.5 Proposed Timeline

The timeline below outlines the objectives coupled with the start dates for the specific tasks that should be taken during the year of 2015.

Task		Timing by Month, beginning January 2015											
No.	Objective/Specific Tasks	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
1	To expand / increase and attract meeting and convention business to Atlantic City												
1.1	Develop marketing plan to promote Atlantic City in the Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions (MICE) industry at least three years out												
1.2	Develop well-trained sales workforce by developing a sales training course to carry out the mission of Meet AC												
1.3	Develop working groups to focus on market expansion and implementation												
1.4	Expand sales force to aggressively secure new and repeat business												
1.5	Research current meetings and conventions that are held in Atlantic City												
1.6	Partner with Atlantic City International Airport to increase air service												
2	To increase the number of bookings												
2.1	Conduct at least 15 cold call sales a month per Meet AC's sales team member												
2.2	Develop a loyalty program for direct bookings with a powerful call to action / incentive to businesses / groups that book outside of 3 years												

Task		Timing by Month, beginning January 2015											
No.	Objective/Specific Tasks	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
3	To increase revenue in Atlantic City												
3.1	Monitor economic impact figures for the city on an annual basis												
3.2	Attract the leisure market (blending of leisure and business travelers) to generate an increase of overnight visitors from previous year												
3.3	Design sales goal campaign for sales team to collaboratively generate 300,000 room nights for 2016												
4	To generate positive brand awareness to further promote Meet AC												
4.1	Develop budget for advertising campaign												
4.2	Develop public relations campaign												
4.3	Develop print and digital ad campaign focusing on the B2B and B2C												
4.4	Promote Atlantic City as the “East Coast’s premier seaside meeting location and popular year-round destination” in at least 5 trade publications												
4.5	Join at least two leading industry associations to validate organization’s reputation and pursue new business opportunities												
4.6	Market Meet AC brand consistently across social media platforms (Facebook, YouTube, website, etc.)												

7.0 Contingency Planning

7.1 Contingencies Identified

Contingency plans are often overlooked by most organizations when developing their respective strategic plans. However, this step should not be overlooked given the potential catastrophic effect on the success of the organization's desired state. We have identified the following internal and external vulnerabilities and opportunities that could seriously derail, alter or impede the direction of Meet AC's applied strategic plan and their desired state.

Best-case scenario: Atlantic City's popularity exceeds projected levels among industry professionals.

Worst-case scenario: Collapse of Meet AC's organizational culture.

Should any situation illustrated in the chart below occur, Meet AC should implement contingency plans to minimize disruption to their strategic plan and their desired state.

		Focus	
		Internal	External
Emphasis	Vulnerability	Quadrant 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Atlantic City not recognized as leading meeting destination• Loss/departure of CEO• Collapse of organizational Culture	Quadrant 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loss of financial support from Casino Reinvestment Development Authority• Natural disaster such as hurricane Sandy• Tarnished reputation via collaboration with industry associations
	Opportunity	Quadrant 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Atlantic City's popularity among industry professionals exceeds projected levels• Atlantic City's popularity skyrockets• Meet AC's reputation firmly established	Quadrant 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Infrastructure complete and exceeds demand• Exclusive partnerships with national associations / organizations• Increased governmental support and funding

7.2 Best and Worst Cases / Trigger Points

Best Case Scenario: Atlantic City's popularity among industry professionals exceeds projected levels.

Trigger Points	Levels of Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demands of meeting space and amenities exceed availability.• Bookings carry through multiple months and years.• Inquiries exceed employees' response capacity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The CEO should assess the city's infrastructure including local services and amenities. CEO should explore alternative options to meet immediate demand while developing strategies with collaborating associations / local government to address future demands.• The Human Resources Department should assess staff levels to determine areas, which either are under or overstaffed to reorganize/reassign staff members to address immediate demands while developing / increasing recruitment efforts to address future demands.

Worst Case Scenario: Loss of financial support from Casino Reinvestment Development Authority.

Trigger Points	Levels of Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Economic decline results in government officials slowly decreasing funding.• Change in government official's priorities.• Gradual decline of taxpayer support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The CEO and the CFO should work closely to determine / assess impact of decreased funding.• The CEO should explore collaborative opportunities with local government to develop mutually beneficial programs and services to generate and / or seek additional funding sources.• The CEO and Public Relations Team should develop a strategic public relations campaign that stresses the positive effect that the increase on tourism has on the region and its citizens. Additionally, all staff should play an active role in advancing the mission of the organization.

8.0 Implementation

8.1 Schedule

In the implementation phase of ASP, Meet AC will move from a strategic planning mode to a strategic management mode, in which the newly formed organization's focus will be on implementing the strategic plan. Strategic management will require the execution of an explicit applied strategic plan involving a high degree of commitment from Meet AC's CEO, Mr. James Woods, a plan that is consistent with the values and culture of Meet AC, and essential skills and competencies to execute the plan.

Implementation of the 2015-2019 Meet AC Applied Strategic Plan will commence early in 2015 and should continue throughout the 2015-2019 period. The planning team highly recommends the formation of working groups around the four Critical Success Indicators (CSIs) to increase and attract meeting and convention business to Atlantic City.

The first steps in the implementation process will likely include prioritization of the various objectives underlying each CSI and the partners who might assist with implementation. Partners include the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority (CRDA), the Atlantic City Alliance and Global Spectrum, a newly selected management company of the Greater Atlantic City Convention Center and Historic Boardwalk Hall. Implementation will require concerted and coordinated effort on the part of numerous organizations and entities across Atlantic City over an extended period of time.

The implementation phase is continuous and should incorporate ongoing monitoring of the environment, focusing on the internal, competitive, industry and macro environments. This process of monitoring and adjustment is particularly important, as tourism matters may force Meet AC to adjust the plan or its timing. Involvement, commitment and collaboration will be essential during the implementation of the 2015-2019 Meet AC Applied Strategic Plan.

9.0 Conclusion

Meet AC faces a myriad of challenges as it embarks on making Atlantic City, New Jersey a premier and renowned meeting and travel destination. Meet AC must face these challenges head-on with the certainty that once these challenges are overcome, Atlantic City, New Jersey will be a leader in the meeting and travel industry. The meeting industry is a virtuous starting point. The meeting industry remains at the forefront of global economic growth, which presents vast opportunities. Meet AC must focus its concerted efforts to expand its reach in the meeting industry and in so doing establish Atlantic City, New Jersey as a competitive meeting and travel destination. The key to establishing Atlantic City, New Jersey as a renowned destination lies in the establishment of strategic and influential partnerships that solidify and strengthen the Meet AC brand. These concerted efforts combined with the strategies presented in this applied strategic plan are key factors for success. Moreover, the spirit of the city, the support of its citizens, its resource rich location and the formation of Meet AC serve to feed and strengthen Atlantic City, New Jersey's uncompromising and enduring appetite toward success. The attainment of the aforementioned goals and objectives will culminate and position Atlantic City, New Jersey as a prominent leader in the meeting and convention industry.

10.0 Acknowledgements

Team members would like to acknowledge the support and cooperation of Meet AC. The team extends a special thanks to James (Jim) Wood, President and CEO for accepting our proposal and contributing time and energy into this project. His expertise and commitment was especially helpful in the execution of the 2015 – 2019 Meet AC Applied Strategic Plan.

Furthermore, team members would like to thank Dr. Sheryl Elliot for her expert suggestions and guidance that helped ensure the applied strategic plan fulfilled the best practice principles.

Finally, we applaud the combined efforts of the citizens of Atlantic City, New Jersey, local government officials, proprietors, business owners and the Meet AC team as they bravely embark on the challenging journey ahead. Their efforts, which secure the preservation of a great American city, are recognized and acknowledged to the fullest.

11.0 References

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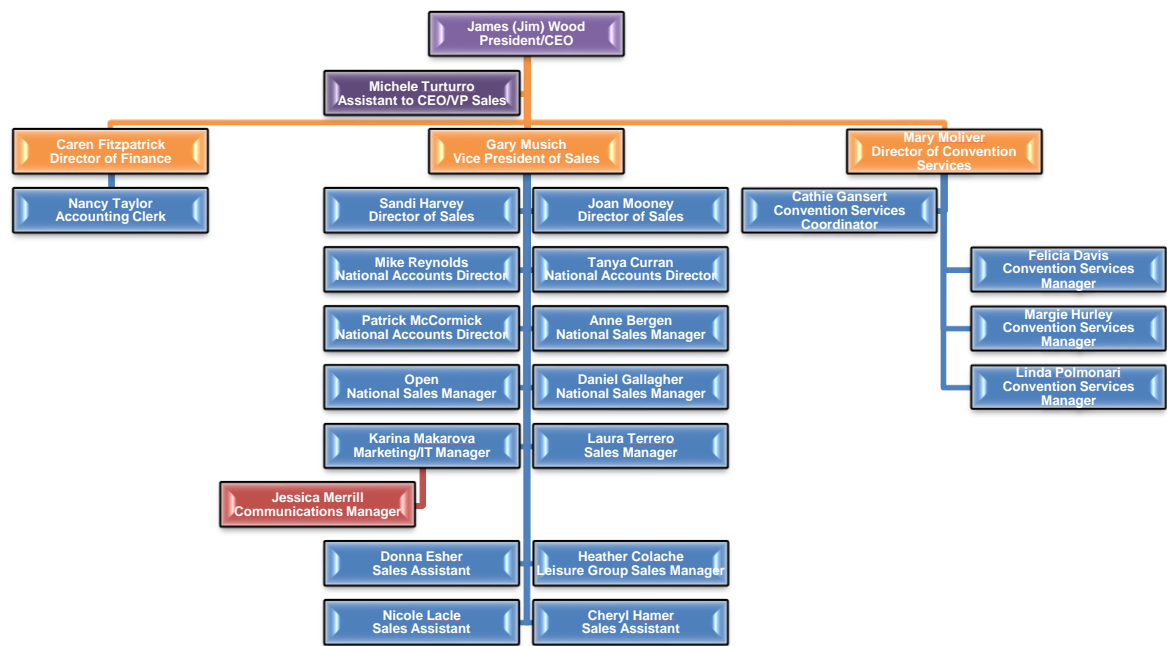
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12.0 Appendices

12.1 Meet AC Organizational Chart



12.2 Menu of Services



August 18, 2013

TO: Jim Wood
Chief Executive Officer

FROM: John Parke
President & CEO

RE: Menu of Services

Strategic Planning: \$20,000

- ✓ Executive staff and select sales team members (10 interviews) & Stakeholders (10 interviews)
- ✓ Facilitation
- ✓ Framework development

Event Strategy: \$18,000

Sales team mentoring used in developing a plan of action targeting new high value accounts:

- 1) Identify 24 high value customers (new accounts)
- 2) Building account action plans (with sales team members collaboration)
- 3) One-on-one telephone meetings with sales team members
- 4) Present findings to CVB leadership

This will result in:

- ✓ Improving proactive account planning skills
- ✓ Setting the right roles and responsibilities for each person engaged in the account team
- ✓ Model and foster good cross-functional team behaviors
- ✓ Oversight of the sales process to close more accounts for the destination

Optional:

- ✓ Coaching sessions – \$900 per participant (includes three one-hour telephone calls, personal action plan and executive summary).

Lapsed Customer Research: \$8,000

- ✓ **Lapsed and/lost customer interviews:** Conduct 10 interviews with former customers to determine what is needed for these customers to return to the destination in the future. \$3,500

Through confidential, one-on-one interviews, Leadership Synergies will solicit buy-in for recommendations and identify the most culturally friendly approach to achieving goals and objectives. Interview questions will be approved in advance.
- ✓ **Lapsed and/lost customer e-survey** with former customers (those not interviewed) to further validate interview findings and gather enough supporting data to be statistically valid. \$2,500
- ✓ Executive Summary of results \$2,000

Current Customer Research: \$8,000

- ✓ **Customer interviews:** Conduct 25 interviews with current customers. \$3,500

Through confidential, one-on-one interviews, Leadership Synergies will assess satisfaction, solicit buy-in for recommendations and identify the most culturally friendly approach to achieving goals and objectives. Interview questions will be approved in advance.
- ✓ **Customer e-survey** (those not interviewed) to further validate interview findings and gather enough supporting data to be statistically valid. \$2,500
- ✓ Executive Summary of results \$2,000

Board of Directors facilitation: \$9,000

- ✓ Planning calls
- ✓ Board of Directors interviews
- ✓ One-day facilitation

Time and Motion Study: \$4,500

Conduct a comprehensive Time and Motion analysis of the sales team to achieve the following results:

- ✓ Identify where the sales team spends its time and on which activities
- ✓ To work together more collaboratively to sell the destination more effectively
- ✓ To expose areas of redundancy
- ✓ To expose areas lacking and need time for improvement
- ✓ Executive Summary of results

360-Degree Assessment: \$4,500

The Leadership Synergies 360-Degree Evaluation is a tool designed for sales and services professionals and is customized to the hospitality sector.

An in-depth, multi-level skills evaluation of an individual

- Look from all perspectives: provides a more complete picture of the individual
- Aggregate data are presented to individuals in terms of comparing to self and peers
- Cumulative team data are presented to show strengths and need areas of the team
- Executive Summary of results

Sales Training: Two-day session - The goal is to facilitate a well-planned, high-quality, sales training and team-building.

Success measurements:

- ✚ Engagement
- ✚ Motivated
- ✚ Six month follow-up of results
- ✚ Techniques to drive quick wins
- ✚ Tools

Day One

- Segment 1: Advanced Selling Concepts: Voice of the Customer
- Segment 2: Industry Trends
- Segment 3: The Changing Role of Third Parties in the Marketplace
- Segment 4: How to Sell as a Destination and Competitive Evaluation

Day Two

- Segment 5: Sales process Mapping
- Segment 6: Review of Selling Basics
- Segment 7: Personal Branding

Fees: \$7,000 USD per day for a 2-day training session (unlimited attendance)
Travel expenses and optional items are not included in sales training fee.

Optional:

Pre-session e-survey (to gather attendee input on content):	\$1,000
Post-session survey and executive summary to assess attendee satisfaction	\$1,000
Webinar (60 days after training)	\$1,500

The fees quoted above are good for 30 days.