



*feel the  
inspiration*

# Queenstown Convention Bureau Prevue Visionary Summit 2019

## Event Report

October 2019

**Destination Queenstown**

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## 1. Introduction and background

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Prevue Visionary Summit was held in Chicago, US on 21 and 22 October 2019.

There were 6 partners representing NZ – Tourism New Zealand, Destination Queenstown, Air NZ, Haka Works, ID New Zealand, American Airlines

Prevue Summits are a unique event experience bringing a select group of exclusively New Zealand suppliers and experienced, pre-qualified North American meeting planners together in a setting for interactive discussion and networking. With a focus on education and thought leadership, summit topics are crafted by Prevue especially with the attendee audience in mind.

As a custom New Zealand event, content is designed to help planners navigate the complexity of planning international meetings and incentives with New Zealand centric examples discussed throughout.

This custom created summit gave us exclusive access to pre-qualified meeting planners over a day and a half. Planners qualified to attend are senior buyers with an average of 19 years of industry experience who book long haul incentive, meeting and conference programs. They are sourced from all over the United States.

Planners are motivated to attend based on access to quality education content (for which they will earn qualification credits), respected industry speakers and thought leaders as well as the interest they have to learn more about New Zealand as a MICE destination.

The Global Meeting and Incentive Planning Summit 2019 was a valuable opportunity to get to know a hand-picked and highly experienced group of meeting planners in an intimate setting for one-on-one appointments, in addition to roundtable discussions and networking opportunities around the education sessions.

## 2. Objectives

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- Achieve a more thorough understanding of the North American market – insights, trends, what clients want/challenges
- Support Tourism NZ in driving and developing the North American BE market for NZ
- Facilitate new business relationships and expand the network of engaged buyers for the Queenstown region
- Promote the ZQN/AKL dual destination proposition as per the MOU
- Increase general destination & product knowledge of buyers
- Generate RFPs for incentive travel to New Zealand
- Build the Bureau's database of North American buyers
- Connect with key industry partners with a view to working more closely with them on joint ventures, in particular American Airlines, Air NZ and ID NZ
- Understand key market insights and any roadblocks we face in order to fine tune our message

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### 3. Key messages

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- Ease of access, direct flights to AKL from multiple North American cities, overnight flight, short domestic flight time AKL-ZQN
- Increase in Queenstown accommodation capacity with a number of new hotels soon to open or scheduled for 2020-2022
- Cost effective option – ground costs are favourable with current exchange rates, airlines pricing is becoming much more competitive
- Genuine and authentic hospitality – we welcome visitors from around the world
- Quality accommodation, meeting facilities and venue options set against a stunning natural backdrop
- Beautiful, clean and safe environment
- Unparalleled range of activities make it the perfect incentive destination
- Option to experience 2 destinations with ZQN/AKL proposition
- Direct flights from east coast of Australia for those groups looking at doing both countries

### 4. Appointments and business sessions

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- 30 x one on one 7 minute appointments
- 7 x potential leads for business in the next 3 years. 4 briefs to be sent by clients first quarter of 2020, rest to be flagged to follow up in future
- Some good potential famil invitees. Will work closely with TNZ, Alynne from American Airlines and Celeste from ID on a March 2020 famil of incentive buyers
- Guest speaker sessions – Transformative Incentive Travel, Incentive Travel trends and Minimising Risk in Incentive Travel
- 1 x open forum session of round table discussions
- 1 x Maori performance and educational presentation (haka workshop)
- Networking opportunities: Welcome cocktail function, 2 x group lunches and 1 x group breakfast.

### 5. Overview of buyer commentary from appointments

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General observations and feedback from the buyers:

- Cost of airfares is still a major issue for some. We lose business to Europe even though the ground costs in NZ are good because the air costs overshadow savings on ground
- Education is still needed in terms of distance and time to travel to NZ, however with more routes being added from multiple airlines this will become less of an issue as industry partners penetrate the market with messaging
- Aligned to this is the duration of the trip. Once they understand that flights can be taken overnight, they are much more open to considering NZ
- Most groups are now “concentives” – incentives with a meeting component for tax purposes
- Europe and Asia are our major destinational competition

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- Most people liked the idea of dual destination (e.g. Auckland/Queenstown) due to the distance travelled and wanting to experience more of the country. Generally, a programme of 2 nights Auckland and 4 nights Queenstown seemed to appeal the most
- International hotel chains are not a necessity and unique/bespoke accommodation offerings were more favourable
- The variety of activities available in Queenstown was a huge draw card as something to appeal to all demographics of traveller
- Itineraries need to incorporate activity options and also free time to explore area – Queenstown’s ‘compact’ setting was very appealing
- 90% of the buyers understand the benefits of Bureaux and use them very actively. They appreciate this service and also appreciate the anonymity of them
- Most of the planners also utilise Cvent as a sourcing tool for RFPs
- Nearly all planners indicated they would use the services of a DMC for NZ programmes
- Need to communicate the safety message more strongly and clearly – this is very important to US buyers and clients

## 6. North American Market Insights

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As well as the appointments with buyers, the panel and speaker sessions provided some great insights into the current state of the North American incentive market and trends/direction/challenges for the future:

Millennials are the next wave of delegates and we are seeing huge changes in qualifier preferences

- More unprogrammed time
- More choice – multiple flexible activities
- More unique experiences/encounters
- More authenticity – local food, local beer
- More wellness – spa, yoga, 5km walks – “wellness is the new golf”
- More “off the beaten path”
- More “meaningful” – CSR, sustainability
- Inclusion of partner/spouse in programme

Company Objectives for Incentives

- Still focused on profitability and productivity but.....
- Greater concern for corporate culture and work relationships
- Greater focus on the higher purpose of work, the “Why?”
- All to do with soft power – giving people a purpose to be with the company they are with
- This generation will stay in a job because of purpose not remuneration
- Treating people well pays dividends
- Many corporations are in some ways shifting from a shareholder model to a stakeholder model = basis of incentive travel focus
- Benefits are improved engagement among the team, enhanced customer satisfaction, improved retention of staff, better relationship building and increased mindshare

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#### Key ways to create transformational incentive travel experiences

- Focus on personalisation
- Focus on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> tier destinations – path less travelled, less likely to have been there, more edgy/raw, more perceived risk, more out of comfort zone, European planners are much better at this. North American market needs to take note
- Focus on independence – less homogeneity, more indie, local, non-chain
- Focus on experiential learning – use techniques of experiential learning to foster serendipity

#### Budgets are stagnant

- Very little growth in budgets foreseeable therefore planners need to be more creative
- Delegates want more free time in the programme so they are now looking to re-purpose budget into other places e.g. arrivals and departures which are very important
- It's not necessarily about 5 star hotels and days of activities. Want more flexibility and freedom. Money can therefore be reallocated to evening functions
- Authenticity and personalisation are impactful but do not need to cost
- Picking destinations with good exchange rates is being considered to make the budget go further
- Change in type of gifts so there is less spend and/or wastage. Delegates can choose more local gifts
- Use of independent properties rather than big chains. Giving back to local destination

#### Improving the Incentive Experience

- Focus for planners to win the business is far less on financial incentives and more on offering “one of a kind” exclusive experiences, including more on-site staff or services elements for the same price, partnering to provide more services from a single source
- Increase in team incentives – extending rewards to other team members like operations who assist the sales people. “Extending the story beyond the sales team”
- Other suggested ways of improving the incentive experience includes delegates selecting the persona they want to “be” on the programme so activities, gifts etc. are tailored to them
- Example: personalised driver tour – give people a car and a driver so they can experience the destination the way they want to
- For older groups culture is still important, using school children, local cultural experiences
- Some planners hold back money for a WOW factor that is done on the “fly”- something that is organised during the trip based on delegate feedback and conversations

#### Wellness

- Now part of all programmes
- Often incorporated into activities e.g. hike to a winery rather than coach
- Healthy options in F&B
- Active elements of destination that are unique to where they are
- Spa is also a requirement now
- CSR is also seen as part of this – the “feel good” factor

#### Duty of Care

- Companies exercise a lot of caution when choosing a destination – look at safety and security, risk management
- Companies are now looking at where all their people are globally at any one time
- Need to help educate clients to choose destinations with the right infrastructure

- Crisis management plans are now SOP
- Retaining a strong DMC is also seen as key
- Corporate company's security teams are now included in vetting destinations – more prevalent for US companies
- It is also important to educate clients who may think some destinations are dangerous when in fact they are not

## 7. Summary

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This was the second time the QCB had attended this event, however it was my first foray into this market since the reallocation of segments. I had some expectations based on last year's report which I believe were met in terms of our overall objectives and the quality of the event.

I was very pleased with the quality of buyers at the summit. Most seem genuinely keen to bring business to NZ and were very enthusiastic about the offering we have. I met with a wide range of meeting planners, from small independents to key contacts at some of the largest incentive houses e.g. AMEX, BCD, CWT. There were great connections with these larger companies due to existing relationships with their Australian offices which should prove useful in future for making in-roads into the US market when planning sales calls.

In addition to meeting with key buyers, it was also hugely beneficial to spend time with Mandy from Tourism NZ and meet Alynne Hanford from American Airlines. Alynne is extremely experienced and will be a fantastic help when targeting US buyers – she has great relationships with all the main planners. Additionally, I had some excellent discussions with Lynda Baum from ID NZ (their US rep) which then paved the way for a very constructive and positive catch up with Celeste Jones at the CINZ Conference. We are going to look at how the Bureau and ID can work much more closely than we have in the past, starting with the March 2020 US famil.

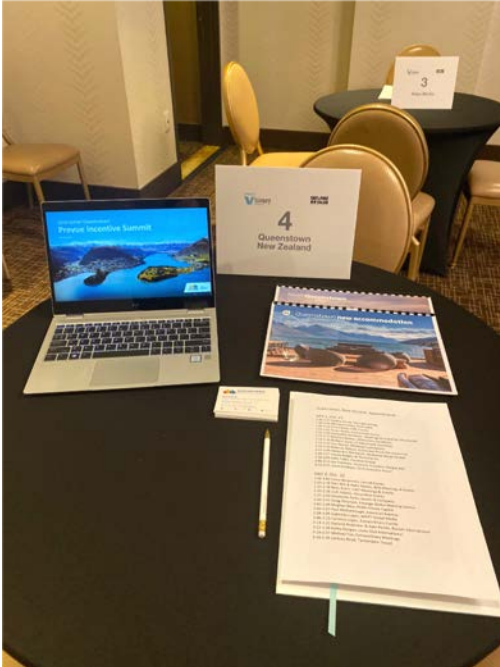
Lastly, in addition to the summit, I met with Michelle Crowley, Chief Growth and Innovation Officer at PCMA (Professional Convention Management Association). Michelle provided a very thorough overview of the North American market, key player identification, strategies to engage with the market and other industry bodies, and opportunities for us to work with PCMA moving forward. She also connected me with the APAC division.

I see PCMA being a key organisation to partner with in targeting corporates (particularly Fortune 500 companies) directly. I will expand on this in the North American Strategy Plan for 2020/2021.

Overall, I felt the trip (albeit relatively short) was very worthwhile and the summit was a great event. I would like to see Tourism NZ retain it on the calendar of events for 2020/21, and would recommend we participate again.

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