



# Different by Nature.

## CUSTOMER ADVISORY BOARD October 4 – 6, 2007 Meeting Minutes Confidential

### Council Members

Marilee Chisholm

Sue Davis

Nancy Elder

Lori Jenks

Elyce Jones

Desirée Knight, CMP

Shirlee Kyle

Stephanie Marshall, CMP

Stephen Miner

Ross Mirmelstein, CMP

Mike Morgan

Keith Schlesinger

Lil Shepherd

Shari Wilson

USANA

SPIE-International Society of Optical Engineering

American Society for Microbiology

Outdoor Retailer

Omniture

The American Railway Engineering and Maintenance of  
Way Association

Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA)

American Council on Education

American Wind Energy Association

National Sheriffs' Association

Novell, Inc.

American Society of Agronomy

Young Living Essential Oils

Rotary International

### Salt Lake Host Committee

Scott Beck

Pat Holmes

Steve Lindburg

Mark White

Salt Lake Convention & Visitors Bureau

Salt Lake Convention & Visitors Bureau

Hilton Salt Lake City Center & SLCVB Board of Trustees  
Executive Committee

Salt Lake Convention & Visitors Bureau

### Facilitator

David Kliman, CMP, CMM

The Kliman Group

**Gallery Attendees**

Lee Adamson	Salt Lake Convention & Visitors Bureau
Brittany Anderson	Hilton Salt Lake City Center
Ellen Birrell	Salt Lake Convention & Visitors Bureau
Mayor Peter Corroon	Mayor of Salt Lake County
Stefanie Dean	Hilton Salt Lake City Center
Melissa Deveraux	Hilton Salt Lake City Center
Mark Erekson	The Grand America Hotel & SLCVB Board of Trustees
Royce Failner	Salt Lake Convention & Visitors Bureau
Heidi Falk	Salt Lake Convention & Visitors Bureau
Annie Harrell	Salt Lake Convention & Visitors Bureau
Dan Hayes	Salt Palace Convention Center
Allyson Jackson	Salt Palace Convention Center / South Towne Expo Center & SLCVB Board of Trustees Executive Committee
Tyson Lybbert	Marriott Salt Lake City Center
Sam Macy	Hilton Salt Lake City Center
Michael Mack	Salt Lake Convention & Visitors Bureau
Connie Marshall	Alta Ski Area & SLCVB Board of Trustees Executive Committee
“B” Murphy	Modern Exposition Services & Chair-elect, Salt Palace Convention Center Facilities Advisory Committee
Ruth Naccarato	Snowbird Ski & Summer Resort
Robert O’Neil	Salt Lake City Marriott Downtown
Sally O’Neill	Salt Lake Convention & Visitors Bureau
Kelly Olsen	Rare Method
Karen Osment	The Grand America Hotel
Tori Piersante	Salt Lake Convention & Visitors Bureau
Julie Rhoads	Salt Lake Convention & Visitors Bureau
Shawn Stinson	Salt Lake Convention & Visitors Bureau
Dave Thomas	Rare Method
Eric Thompson	Salt Lake Convention & Visitors Bureau
Diane Utley	Salt Lake Convention & Visitors Bureau
Guy Woodbury	Woodbury Corporation & SLCVB Board of Trustees Executive Committee

# Salt Lake Customer Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

## October 4 – 6, 2007

### Friday, October 5, 2007

#### *Welcome*

Board members, Salt Lake hosts and Gallery attendees made introductions.

#### *Opening Comments – Scott Beck and David Kliman*

Scott and David welcomed the Board and thanked them for their time and commitment to Salt Lake. The Board was asked to speak honestly and openly on behalf of the meetings and convention industry as well as their respective organizations; Salt Lake wants unfiltered feedback. The Board's role is to act as a sounding board; a highly relevant sample of Salt Lake's target meetings and convention audience. During this and future meetings, and over the course of its 3 year term, the Board will preview, critique and modify sales, marketing and operational plans for greater effectiveness. Salt Lake will listen and learn from the Board and appropriate action will be taken on its recommendations.

#### *Salt Lake Perceptions & Realities – Customer Advisory Board*

The Board was asked to comment on meeting professionals'/show organizers', attendees and key stakeholders' perceptions and misperceptions regarding the destination. The following feedback was provided:

#### **Misperceptions:**

- There's nothing to do here; "it's hard to repeat events here because once you've been here you've 'been there, done that'"
- Can't drink, very limited options to party
- Overwhelming presence of LDS Church in all aspects of city life; "no balance"
- Daunting rules and regulations governing private clubs
- Hesitant to explore some parts of the City; "some parts of the City are closed to visitors"
- Healthy organic food is hard to find in SLC

Scott reviewed laws governing alcohol consumption which have changed significantly since 1998. To get a drink in a restaurant, food must also be ordered. Bars can serve drinks without food provided a membership is purchased (similar to a cover charge). Density of bars is limited to 2 per block. Lobbying efforts are underway to change this law to allow a higher density of bars and clubs.

#### **Positive Perceptions**

- Strong volunteer community benefits many meetings and events
- Salt Lake "gets winter"; winter is very effectively marketed, but appreciation of other seasons is more limited
- Right to Work State; outstanding labor force, but some members felt this is not well promoted
- "Gorgeous" destination; the mountains and skyline are spectacular

### **Recommendations:**

- Communicate transparently regarding alcohol regulations and Sunday restaurant closures; don't allow buyers to be surprised
- Sell Salt Lake's low cost and strong culture of customer service
- Create themed event packages promoting options for networking and events; promote to buyers to address the "nothing to do" misperception
- Create Sunday evening packages to counter closures of many (not all) restaurants; continue efforts to get restaurants to open Sundays when large groups are in town
- Continue lobbying efforts to allow higher density of bars and clubs
- Market SLC outstanding labor force
- Send reprints or web link of October 2007 Delta Inflight *Sky Magazine* to potential and current customers

### ***Advertising and Branding – Pat Holmes***

Pat reviewed past and current Bureau brands and showed several ads targeting the meetings market.

### **The Board provided the following feedback:**

*Different by Nature* was cited by some local members as reinforcing negative stereotypes, indicating the forest service imagery was deemed "not exciting" and "old fashioned". Others thought the forest service sign was in keeping with Salt Lake's outdoor natural environment and spoke to its message.

- The Board recommended ads attempting to target the meetings market clearly showing images related to social networking
- Use "business" messages which mix pragmatic and emotional images (networking and spectacular scenery).
- The mountains and skyline ad was cited as very positive by some members
- Almost all Board members stated they do not read meeting trade magazines; while some stack and store magazines and then "rip and read" articles. None reported making buying decisions based on ads
- Peer to Peer web testimonials are highly respected and sometimes help tip the balance in favor of a destination
- Email communications which offer quick information regarding "what's new" are favored ; these should contain no graphics, but should provide web links for more information
- Los Angeles, Atlanta and Orlando CVBs were cited as having best practice highly effective monthly client communications tools
- USB memory sticks and "Web Keys" which launch users to websites were cited as highly effective marketing tools

### ***Customer Report Cards***

**Shari Wilson from Rotary International provided the following report on their recent meeting in Salt Lake:**

- Meeting was moved from New Orleans due to Hurricane Katrina
- 15,439 paid attendees from 142 nations
- 73% flew to SLC, 87% booked a room, 45% used the Housing Bureau, 24% booked directly with a hotel, 79% visited the booth for next year's meeting in LA

- Venues included Salt Palace Halls 1-5 for exhibits; Halls A-D for General Sessions and Hall E for Registration and Back Stage Production
- 5,500 rooms on peak night, produced a total of 24,000 room nights; Marriott and Hilton were headquarter hotels
- The Housing Connection used to manage their room block
- 65% registered online for the meeting

#### **Successes**

- Police Department provided “phenomenal” traffic control support; transportation was “smoothest ever” in Rotary history
- Trax Light Rail service was efficient and popular
- Utah Food Services was “out of this world”
- Manpower Inc was “all great”; very helpful
- “Well trained volunteers who show up!” (SLC should promote this)
- Foreign language skills of local population is unique and remarkable

#### **Challenges:**

- Size of room block required using hotels up to 30 minutes from downtown; some of these hotels had no knowledge of Rotary; creating inconsistent responses and difficult coordination
- Limited taxi availability outside peak hours; inconsistent service and pricing
- No international currency exchange available on weekend days
- Salt Palace 155, 225, 355 meeting room access is cumbersome; stairway, small elevators and cage door are awkward and inefficient
- Limited number of restaurants open on Sundays is a problem

#### **Marilee Chisholm from USANA provided the following report on their recent meeting in Salt Lake:**

- USANA is a 15 year old network marketing company experiencing rapid growth. The Annual Meeting has grown from 3,500 attendees in 2001 to 7,000 in 2006
- 60% of attendees are first timers, typical attendee holds USANA as a side job
- Salt Palace and EnergySolutions Arena used as venues
- 60 + buses used to provide shuttles to West Valley
- Housing Connection used; booked 2,150 rooms

#### **Successes:**

- Utah Food Service was “phenomenal”
- Salt Palace Event Managers provided “great service”
- Decor vendors very cooperative
- Very friendly hotel staff
- Numerous ICW (in conjunction with) events were well managed by hotels and other service providers
- 150 limousine transfers were “seamless”

#### **No significant challenges were cited**

#### **Keith Schlesinger from the American Society of Agronomy provided the following report on its 2005 meeting in Salt Lake:**

- 2005 meeting attracted 4,200 attendees using 1,481 rooms on peak night
- 125,000 square feet of space was used including 100 10X10 booths and numerous poster boards

- 2,400 research papers; oral sessions took place from 8am to 4pm, followed by a cash bar in the Exhibit Hall from 4pm to 6pm

**Successes:**

- Strong trusting relationship with the CVB was built during the 1999 and 2005 meetings
- Outstanding customer service made “us feel like the only customer; they were always here to help”.
- Excellent value package offered by SLC; hotels and Center priced very fairly
- Banner and window stickers drew praise
- The Housing Connection’s services were “first rate”
- Visitors Tourism Information Center is “great”
- Volunteers are “very helpful”

**Challenges:**

- Need to modernize liquor laws including allowing liquor service on Election Day before 8pm

**Ross Mirmelstein from the National Sheriff's Association provided the following feedback:**

- Salt Lake is his association’s “favorite city” in which to meet
- SLC is “by far” the best American CVB
- Response to RFP was “phenomenal”, exceptional attention to detail
- The Housing Connection “puts others to shame”; managing room blocks is “seamless”
- “Good pricing for Center food, excellent quality”
- All problems were quickly resolved

**Challenges:**

City needs an additional headquarters hotel with a minimum of 600 rooms; 1,000 rooms would be ideal

**Desirée Knight from AREMA - The American Railway Engineering and Maintenance of Way Association made the following comments:**

- SLC has a very strong “can do” attitude
- The Airport provides a great first impression; spectacular view, very efficient and welcoming

***Salt Lake Convention and Visitors Bureau - History and Goals – Scott Beck***

The Bureau was significantly traumatized and is still grieving from the loss of former President and CEO Dianne Nelson Binger. Scott Beck was named President and CEO in 2005; he comes from the Utah hospitality community; most recently having served as General Manager of the Salt Lake City Marriott City Center.

A steady decline in group room night production and citywide events has taken place since 2005. This is contrasted by steady double digit increases in hotel tax revenues since 2004.

In 2007, the Bureau went through an extensive reevaluation. The Bureau has been transformed from a Destination *Marketing* Organization to a Destination *Sales* Organization with a sales team now focused on citywide production with aggressive goals of 28% increases through 2008. Two new sales positions were created in 2007.

The local economy is hot, transient bookings are strong and the group pipeline is showing positive trends since June 2007.

### **Feedback and Recommendations from the Advisory Board:**

- Create targeted ways to include outlying hotels in communications and quarterly meetings to improve their service to citywide convention attendees and planners
- Evaluate attendees' experience in outlying hotels during next series of large citywides
- Create stronger communications tools to educate suppliers regarding economic and service impact of large conventions; including taxi companies and drivers
- San Jose was cited as doing an excellent job in the areas noted above; CEO is very involved and their program has been successful

### ***Meeting Industry Trends – Customer Advisory Board***

The Board discussed meeting industry trends and offered the following feedback and recommendations:

- Bureaus should continue to lobby the U.S. government regarding entry visa regulations and the negative impact current system has on international convention meeting in the USA
- Create tools to better educate international exhibitors regarding Convention Center set up regulations
- On-going training of sales and service personnel is critical
- Convention Services should partner with CVB and Center Sales teams during initial site inspections for citywides. Convention Service Managers are pivotal in creating repeat business
- Succession Planning is key for all Bureaus and Centers
- Proactive Crisis Communications is critical
- Lobby rental car companies to provide more economy class cars during Outdoor Retailers and other large shows, meetings and events
- Fort Lauderdale, Indianapolis, Louisville, San Diego, Las Vegas and San Antonio were named as best in class CVBs

### **Saturday, October 6, 2007**

#### ***Meetings Microsite & Online Meeting Tool Kit***

The Board to comment on the ease (or lack thereof) of navigating the Bureau's meetings microsite; the Board provided the following recommendations:

- Navigation is cumbersome and based on content, not the way the information is used
- *At a Glance Fact Sheet* listing capacities, pricing, service providers for all major venues and suppliers was cited as a best practice
- Venues should list planners' ability to use own service producers (catering, production etc.)
- Online search should include distances in miles from the Convention Center and use a banded ring to also show distances from the core areas surrounding the Center
- Services area should include FedEx/Kinko's, Pharmacies, Hardware and Cell Phone stores, Hospitals, Urgent Care, Post Offices etc.
- Crisis Plan for CVB and Convention Center should have prominent and separate link
- List "*What's New*" prominently "above the fold" on the website
- List restaurants hours of operations; searchable according to whether they are open on Sundays

- Green Meetings:
  - Create “Green Meetings” on the left link and list prominently on the CVB Home Page with an icon
  - Provide information regarding Carbon Offsets and other environmental sustainable tools in this area.
  - Green Meetings Industry Council [www.greenmeetings.info](http://www.greenmeetings.info) was cited as a best practice organization addressing sustainability issues.
  - Promote LEEDS Silver certification of the Convention Center
- Hotel Page
  - Change the word “Accommodations” to “Hotels” in the left hand navigation
  - Delete wasted white space on the Hotel page
  - Hotels should be searchable by size, banded by geographic distance and include distance from Convention Center, total number of rooms and AAA rating. San Jose was cited as having excellent mapping on their website
  - Move the credit card and dollar range legend from bottom to top of the page
  - Delete the hanging chad “E” from the credit card legend
  - Ensure major renovations, constructions, Starbuck co-locations in hotel lobby etc. are noted prominently on hotel listings

### *Open Issues*

**The Board was asked to talk about which CVBs do an excellent job in developing relationships with buyers; the following best practices were cited:**

- Atlanta hosts quarterly lunches in and around DC; they use “hot trendy” restaurants and mix existing and potential customers. They talk briefly about new developments, show a short video or PowerPoint; around 30 buyers typically attend. This format works for some, but not all buyers
- Buyers with offices in suburban areas stated that they will only attend functions which take place in convenient locations to their workplace
- Hosting functions in DC and Chicago during major trade shows taking place outside those cities was cited as a good way to tap into buyers not attending PCMA, MPI, ASAE, IAEM etc.
- Inviting buyers to breakfast during PCMA, MPI etc. is worthwhile (competition is too fierce for dinner on the one free night)
- Participation in the Association of Meeting Professionals [www.ampsweb.org](http://www.ampsweb.org) was cited as a very targeted and effective means of working the DC buyer marketplace
- Starbucks cards, Memory Sticks and Web Keys are valued promotional items which buyers like and use
- Better training is required for sales and service team members who staff trade show booths; they need to be armed with information about top buyers and recognize those buyers individually
- Preparation for telephone sales calls is essential; knowing the schedule for Annual Meetings and not making contact during the critical run up to that meeting is critical – do your homework!
- Effective and targeted email subject lines are critical to ensure communication is opened and read
- Sales Partnership such as Milwaukee/Portland/Pittsburgh CVBs was cited as effective
- Marriott National Sales Office sales communications were cited as effective
- Direct marketing with a targeted and knowledgeable message is well received



- Follow up on lost business is effective; ask why the business went elsewhere, ask for another opportunity to bid for a future meeting
- Offering show organizers and meeting professionals access to local intellectual capital such as educators, scientists, law enforcement, business leaders etc. is highly valued
- Sales and service professionals often overlook the simplest means of effectively winning or servicing a piece of business: “Know Thy Customer”
- Las Vegas, Seattle, Louisville, San Diego and Indianapolis were named as consistently doing a good job of managing the trade show floor. Seattle gives a special gift to key buyers

***The Board was asked to outline effective methods of getting an unwilling association Board of Directors to consider SLC for a future meeting or event:***

- Understand governance and processes
- Work closely with the meeting professional/show organizer

***Miscellaneous Topics***

- Peer to peer testimonials are highly effective in tipping the balance in favor of a destination, some CVBs take high profile planners on critical sales calls; this is very effective
- The Bureau’s list of client references (online and in print) needs to be updated and sorted by like groups, not by date

***Wrap Up***

The Board was thanked for their commitment to the process of continuous improvement for Salt Lake. Their feedback has been tremendously helpful; their candor and honest dialogue will be put to good use. The next meeting is scheduled for March 27 to 29, 2008; please mark your calendars.

***ACTION ITEMS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OCTOBER 2007 MEETING:***

- The Board was asked to send David Kliman their top 3 best practice picks for CVB websites based on ease of navigation
- Film video testimonials during the Spring 2008 meeting of the Advisory Board
- The Bureau’s list of client references (online and in print) requires updating and should be sorted by like groups, not by date
- Communicate transparently regarding alcohol regulations and Sunday restaurant closures
- Sell the value of Salt Lake’s low cost and strong culture of customer service
- Create themed event packages promoting options for networking and events; promote to buyers to address the “nothing to do” misperception
- Create Sunday evening packages to counter closures of many restaurants; continue efforts to get restaurants to open Sundays when large groups are in town
- Continue lobbying efforts to allow higher density of bars and clubs
- Market Salt Lake’s well trained labor and volunteer work force
- Send reprints or web link of October 2007 Delta Inflight *Sky Magazine* to potential and current customers
- Create targeted ways to include outlying hotels in communications and quarterly meetings to improve their service to citywide convention attendees and planners
- Evaluate attendees’ experience in outlying hotels during next series of large citywides

- Create stronger communications tools to educate suppliers regarding economic and service impact of large conventions; including taxi companies and drivers
- Advertising & Branding
  - The Board recommended ads targeting the meetings market clearly showing images related to social networking
  - Use “business” messages which mix pragmatic and emotional images (networking and spectacular scenery).
- Website recommendations:
  - Change the word “Accommodations” to “Hotels” in the left hand navigation
  - Delete wasted white space on the Hotel page
  - Hotels should be searchable by size, banded by geographic distance and include distance from Convention Center, total number of rooms and AAA rating
  - Move credit card and dollar range legend from bottom to top of the page
  - Delete the hanging chad “E” from the credit card legend
  - Ensure major renovations and construction are noted prominently on hotel listings
  - List in-house Starbucks location on hotel home pages
  - Create an *At a Glance Fact Sheet* listing capacities, pricing, service providers for all major venues and suppliers
  - Venues should list planners’ ability to use own service providers (catering, production etc.)
  - Online search should include distances in miles from the Convention Center and use a banded ring to also show distances from the core areas surrounding the Center
  - Services area should include FedEx/Kinko’s, Pharmacies, Hardware and Cell Phone stores, Hospitals, Urgent Care, Post Offices etc.
  - Crisis Plan for CVB and Convention Center should have a prominent and separate link
  - List “What’s New” prominently “above the fold” on the website
  - List restaurants’ hours of operations, searchable according to whether they are open on Sundays
- Green Meetings:
  - Create “Green Meetings” left link and list prominently on the CVB Home Page with an icon
  - Provide information regarding Carbon Offsets and other environmental sustainable tools in this area of the website
  - Green Meetings Industry Council [www.greenmeetings.info](http://www.greenmeetings.info) was cited as a best practice organization addressing key sustainability issues
  - Promote LEEDS Silver certification of the Convention Center