



Visit SLO CAL Marketing Committee Meeting
Tuesday, March 11, 2025
8:30 am – 5 pm
Niner, Paso Robles

1. CALL TO ORDER

PRESENT: Ashlee Akers, Jim Allen, Terrie Banish, Sheridan Bohlken, Jacqui Clark-Charlesworth, Cheryl Cuming, Gordon Jackson, Stacie Jacob, Lori Keller, Courtney Pene, Lindsey Roberts, Linda Sanpei, John Sorgenfrei, Leann Standish, Jill Tweedie, Michael Wambolt

STAFF PRESENT: Cathy Cartier, Molly Cano, Lisa Belsanti, Matt Halvorson, Mayla Lohnes, Brooke Weisbecker, Megan Leininger, Rachelle Ramirez

AGENCIES PRESENT: Harry Belfour (Pensara), Nick Evans (Pensara), Amanda Ostrove (MMGY), Rachel Haik (Shipyard), Tammy Haughey (Shipyard), John Risser (Shipyard), Beth Shaini (Shipyard), Maureen Thielen (Pensara), Brooke Wieck (Sorjern)

PUBLIC: Tracy Dauterman (Solterra Strategies), Krista Smith (PRWCA)

Call to order at 8:38 am

2. PUBLIC COMMENT (On Non-Agenda Items)

Public Comment – None.

Committee Comment – None.

CONSENT AGENDA – *motion required*

3. Approval of January 14, 2025 Marketing Committee Minutes

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

ACTION: Moved by Jackson/Bohlken to approve the January 14, 2025 Marketing Committee Minutes.

Motion carried: 12-0-1

Jacob, Sanpei & Standish arrived after vote. Tweedie abstained.

4. Visit SLO CAL VP of Marketing Report

Cano reviewed the four Marketing Committee seats up for renewal. A new streamlined renewal form will be shared with committee members wishing to renew. All renewals and applications will be brought to the May meeting for voting. Cano provided an update that the visitation and economic impact will be delivered March 19th to co-op participants.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Jackson asked who is executing the Economic Impact study. Cano replied with Tourism Economics.

BUSINESS ITEMS**M. Cano****5. Introductions & Discussion Overview**

Cano went over the agenda for the day and introduced agency partners while highlighting new faces. Everyone in the room introduced themselves.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

6. Marketing Feedback & Overview

Cano shared the Marketing Committee survey results and explained how this annual questionnaire allows Visit SLO CAL (VSC) to work along each destination and committee member in the spirit of radical collaboration.

Cano share some notable partner trends including the decline in baby boomers as a target audience, an increase in family targeting, and a fall in the freelancer in PR tactics. Haughey called out the difference in the Committee's earned programs target geographic market and the target markets for their overall marketing programs.

The survey results also showed an increase in hosting meeting planner FAMs in sale tactics which aligns with VSC's plans, while the drop-in proactive meeting sales research and pitching is an opportunity for VSC to assist. Cano went over the changes in the importance of things that VSC does according to the Committee and noted that these areas were going to be discusses further in the co-op section of the retreat programing.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Jacob added that we shouldn't ignore Gen Z since they will grow into a future major market. Sorgenfrei shared that some of the discrepancies between geographic markets is because destinations

can make more impact in larger markets with PR tactics than ad spend. Jacob agreed that when paid and earned are invested in the same drive market there is even more impact, but in fly markets earned allows the destinations to get into the mix.

Wambolt drew attention to the Committee's lack of investment in lead generation. Akers spoke highly of the VSC toolkits and the importance of continuing them. Cartier added that toolkits assets can be shared by destinations with local business partners as the destinations see fit. Clark-Charlesworth noted that VSC's PR department sharing coverage is important to continue. Sorgenfrei shared that on large scale marketing events tend to benefit some destinations more than others which may be why it ranked lower in the survey.

7. Setting the Stage: PART 1

Cano kicked off year-to-date program performance and refreshed the Committee on The Land of Brand Campaign. Shaini reviewed paid media results using the full funnel media approach. Shaini shared that the ads are effective in telling the SLO CAL story and inspiring cross-visitation. Shaini presented custom content for this fiscal year, and moving forward, the team will refine the target, evolve video media units and continue content partnerships.

Belsanti, went over earned media objectives and strategies using trends to drive interest. Ostrove spoke to the trends of nostalgia travel, as well as sustainability and upcycled motel interests. Ostrove gave the Committee use examples of trend spotting to garner coverage.

Evans spoke to social media on the strategic and content production side. YTD social performance is above benchmarks on all KPIs. This fiscal year, the team rolled out TikTok, shifted link integration (to stories), increased partner collaboration on posts, continued creative development and supported nomenclature.

Weisbecker presented on the different type of social content of the always on layer which is mobile and social first. She also played some of the social videos that are higher production that were developed from VSC's storytelling framework.

Evans provided an overview and recap of the sustainability series. He played the new campaign recap/trailer video. Evans then presented a review of Wine-O-One and played a video from each pillar in the Wine-O-One series.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Jacob asked if it is possible to over collaborate on socials. Evans answered no, but if organically audience are the same, the content is only served once. Jacob asked for clarification on the new link strategy. Evans explained how to team is now using stories where there is building up and then link a link to the extended content. Akers wondered how many videos were posted this year vs last year, as it might impact video views. Evans replied that the team can get the data and it would be interesting to compare, but he didn't think there had been much of a change. Akers asked for clarification on the posting frequency. Evans replied that VSC focuses on engaging content over the number of posts, but right now posting about 16 – 19 times a month.

8. Setting the Stage: PART 2

Cano introduced the next section on travel trends. Haik spoke to the consumer mindset shift away from the to-do list/itinerary to how one feels during travel. There is also a consumer focus on travel across demographics and generations. Ostrove presented the awaborhood trend and how the neighborhood you stay in impacts travel. Tonwsizing, detour destinations, oenotourim, immersive culinary experiences, goods getaways and art-ventures were additional trends discussed.

Shaini presented paid media trends. Digital first is where majority of time is spent, but traditional media is not dead. Subscription OOT rises to the top (with the amount of time people spend) and social is leveling out. Digital OOH is also on the rise because it's more easily accessible. Makes it easy to target specific audiences with advertising and allows ad change more quickly than traditional OOH. There is no concern with cookies for now, but will continue to monitor.

Ostrove went over earned media trends including the consolidation of media houses, the rise of freelancer, media owning their content, changes to press trip policies and restrictions, media meetings and missions and social influencers.

Evans presented social media trends including that Meta is promoting discovery by demoting unoriginal content, AI's influence in front and behind the scenes, longer form content is returning to the small screen, sound is back and more important than ever in reels, and collaboration is a win-win for brands with shared values.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – There was committee discussion about sharing on socials. Evans clarified that sharing still works the same. Sanpei wondered if you repost a photo but change the content if it is considered original content. Evans clarified that stills are not treated the same for now (it would have repercussion for UGC content). However, changing the caption on a video does not constitute an asset change. Akers asked for clarification on the meaning of longform. Evans replied with 1 – 3 minutes.

9. Break moved to after Setting the Stage: Part 1

10. Breakout Sessions & Report-out

Committee broke into small groups by geographic region and discussed trends in action by brainstorming where the trends are found in four trend categories: awayborhoods & detour destination, oenotourims & townsizing, culinary, and goods getaways & art-ventures.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Groups presented their ideas around the 2025 trends.

11. Social Strategy Evolution moved to item 13: Brand Campaign Concept

12. Lunch

13. Brand Campaign Concept

Haughey provided an overview of the next chapter of SLO CAL brand storytelling. Learning from ethnographic research, a new campaign has been developed and will launch in the second half of next fiscal year. The brand tagline and positioning will stay the same, as they were found to be unequivocally true. Key finding in the study was that a change of pace is synonymous with the destination with a new nuance: SLO CAL Spontaneity.

Risser presented the new brand campaign 'Welcome Detour-ists' and played the manifesto video. Risser shared the "off Script" ad spot concept with the Committee and presented digital ad examples. The idea of the Detour-ist will be used across channels. Ostrove talked about different ways to amplify the new campaign through PR and earned media including unstructured itineraries on media trips and messaging throughout media pitches.

Belfour presented how the team will bring the new campaign branding into socials. Social platforms are well positioned to be able to talk to spontaneity even before the campaign fully launches. Belfour informed the Committee that Pensara and staff are currently working on updating the social strategy to align with the new brand.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Sorgenfrei shared concerns about the new brand campaign missing the slower pace piece. Risser addressed these concerns and assured the Committee the tag line is not being dismissed. All spots will finish with Life's Too Beautiful to Rush and there will be moments of peace in the spots. There will be a combination of active and slower pace. Cartier added that the idea of freedom to choose will be highlighted.

14. Breakout Session #2 & Report-out

Haik went over the rules of the destination detours breakout game. Cano played the brand campaign manifesto video once more before the Committee broke into small groups to play the destination detours game.

Public Comment – None.

Committee discussion – Groups presented their detour itineraries.

15. Break

16. FY26 Co-Op Partnership Opportunities

Cano and Belsanti presented on VSC FY 26 changes. Belsanti shared that international PR model is shifting to working with micro influencers (vetted by Pensara) which will lend itself to spontaneity. Cano shared that VSC is moving from CrowdRiff to SnapSea. This change will offer cost savings. No currently functionality will be lost.

Cano presented and provided an overview of co-op opportunities for the next fiscal year highlighting that the programs are a response to survey results. Staff will follow-up with more information and requests destination

partners share what co-ops they are interested in. VSC co-ops for FY 26 include: economic impact study, visitor profile study (by Heart & Mind), production of detourists campaign and media rotation, Sojern media buy, IPW 2026, HotelBeds, Various Sales FAM Opportunities, Spartan Race, Los Angeles – CA media event and Pheonix media event.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Jacob requested clarification on what a DAM solution would look like. Cano replied that staff is currently working through this solution. Cartier added that now that VSC has built up an asset library and don't need UGC services, a true DAM is a good option. Jacob asked about using influencers domestically. Belsanti replied VSC will continue to use influencers vetted through MMGY. Although it is a case-by-case basis and VSC is not actively recruiting domestically. Akers asked for an update on Visit CA's CrowdRiff travel now program. Halvorson replied that the google amp search function which it relies on is fizzling out and is not something that VSC is engaging with.

Keller inquired if VSC will be doing any work to manage public relations with new tariffs. Cartier responded that although VSC has never been in Canada or Mexico, staff will continue to look to Visit California for messaging in these destinations.

Jacob asked about brand campaign talent. Cartier replied that VSC is looking at using less professional talent and negotiate longer contracts. Risser added that a contract extension will be prenegotiated. Sorgenfrei requested confirmation that there would be a range of talent ages and markets.

Pene asked if Spartan does event production and sponsorship year by year. Cartier replied yes. Cuming wondered if there is a way to survey Spartan participants to see where they are staying. Cartier answered that VSC has their survey responses, but the sample size is small.

17. Wrap Up and Next Steps

Cartier thanked the Committee attendees and the agencies. There will be a survey about the retreat sent out and the Committee is asked to provide feedback about the day. Cartier thanked Cano and reiterated that receiving co-op interest from the destination partners is extremely helpful in VSC's budgeting process. Cartier released the committee for a hosted reception after the sustainability trailer was played once more.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

Next Meeting Marketing May 20, 2025

ADJOURN: 4:18 PM