



Visit SLO CAL Marketing Committee Meeting
Tuesday, March 5, 2024
8:30 am – 5 pm
Niner, Paso Robles

1. CALL TO ORDER

PRESENT: Jim Allen, Ashlee Akers, Terrie Banish, Molly Cano, Cheryl Cuming, Gordon Jackson, Stacie Jacob, Lori Keller, Kathleen Naughton, Joel Peterson, Lindsey Roberts, Lynette Sonne, John Sorgenfrei, Jill Tweedie, Michael Wambolt

STAFF PRESENT: Cathy Cartier, Lisa Belsanti, Kristen Carlson, Matt Halvorson, Grace Casola, Aleigh Hogan, Alyssa Manno, Rachelle Ramirez, Lauren Miller, Brooke Weisbecker, Mayla Lohnes, Megan Leininger, Grace Ryan

AGENCIES PRESENT: Harry Belfour (Pensara), Sara Gorgon (NJF), Maureen Thielen (Shipyard), Tammy Haughey (Shipyard), Beth Shaini (Shipyard), Delaney Coughlin (Shipyard), John Risser (Shipyard), Brooke Wieck (Sorjern)

PUBLIC: Krista Smith (PRWCA), Haley Walter (Abbi Agency), Jacqueline Clark-Charlesworth (City of SLO), Kelly Reynolds (City of Arroyo Grande), Lacie Johns (Travel Paso)

Call to order at 8:43 am

2. PUBLIC COMMENT (On Non-Agenda Items)

Public Comment – None.

Committee Comment – None.

CONSENT AGENDA – *motion required*

3. Approval of November 14, 2023 and January 9, 2024 Marketing Committee Minutes

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

ACTION: Moved by Akers/Peterson to approve the November 14, 2023 and the January 9, 2024 Marketing Committee Minutes

Motion carried: 15: 0-0

CMO REPORT

4. Visit SLO CAL CMO Report

Cartier announced that there are four Marketing Committee seats up for renewal and applications will be brought to the May meeting for voting. Cartier shared that Visit SLO CAL is a finalist for a VCA Poppy Award. Cartier provided an update that the Events & Festivals Working Group resumed meeting. The group created a VSC internal matrix and is developing a toolkit. Cartier shared the UX Study next steps including that functionality and content changes are in progress.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

BUSINESS ITEMS

5. Introductions & Discussion Overview

Cartier provided housekeeping and went over the agenda for the day. Everyone introduced themselves.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

6. Marketing Feedback & Overview

Cartier shared the Marketing Committee survey results. Interestingly committee member's PR and Paid strategy answers diverged.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

7. Setting the Stage: PART 1

Cartier recapped “where we’ve been” discussing The Land of Campaign, House of Brands, SLO CAL Crafted, cross visitation, sustainability, My SLO CAL and Unpacking SLO CAL. VSC will continue to learn into these items across paid, owned and earned channels.

Shaini from Shipyard walked through paid performance using a full funnel media approach. Staff and agencies will continue to refine the target audience, leverage the power of videos to drive brand performance and continue to evolve content partnerships that can provide data in a cookie-less world.

Gorgon from NJF discussed earned media. Staff and agencies will continue grow awareness and the demand of SLO CAL through education about the area including cross visitation messaging by showcasing at least three experiences across the destination and leverage local media relationships. To reach objectives, earned media will use trends to drive interest, meet media where they are and target media whose work appears in drive/fly markets.

Belfour from Pensara presented the social media strategy. The strategy includes always on content, original content development, campaign integration, community support and structured messaging. Belfour also provided a reminder on the messaging matrix, presented a performance update and discussed taking a video lead approach that inspires and educates.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

8. Setting the Stage: PART 2

Haughey from Shipyard shared travel trends for 2024 which include traveling with intent, luxury travel, wellness, culinary and cultural experiences. The definition of luxury is broadening focusing less on grandeur and more on sensitivity. Experiential luxury tourism attracts travelers of younger generations that are fueling the growth in luxury travel. Wellness trends focus on regenerative travel and travel as wellness /self-care. Culinary is trending as a taste of place. And cultural experiences emphasis is on off the beaten path places and day in the life of a local.

Shaini presented on media trends: pay tv households have reached an all-time low. TikTok leads time spent on social, but consumers still prefer to interact with brands on Facebook and YouTube. Shaini discussed AI in media from targeting to creative optimization.

Gorgon shared earned media trends: dry tripping, vibe check-in, destination dupes, AI travel aids, and consolidation of media houses and the rise of the freelancer.

Belfour presented on social media trends: carefully created video content remains on top. Seeing a growth in a new creative class – the “couch creatives.” Lines between B2B and B2C socials are blurring. Belfour also touched on social media as the new search engine and how AI is evolving the way content is being discovered.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

9. Break

10. Breakout Sessions & Report-out

Committee broke into small groups and discussed trends in action (wellness, cultural immersion, culinary as a taste of place, experiential luxury tourism, set jetting and gig tripping, go-cation and grand gatherings).

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Groups presented their itineraries built around the 2024 trends.

11. Lunch

12. FY25 Strategic Opportunities

Staff, agencies and committee discussed:

a.) **Land of...Campaign**

Haughey shared what comes next. The current campaign is still working well but will need to start planning for the next chapter of SLO CAL brand storytelling. The current assets will expire and VSC plans to renew the current suite for 18 months. Cartier added that for those partners that co-opted on the original assets, they will need to join the co-op renewal to extend their usage or stop using the assets in September. Haughey continued that Shipyard will conduct ethnographic research which will help inform the strategic brief for the next campaign. The goal is to interview people doing immersive experiences in SLO CAL.

Committee discussion –

Jacob questioned why they would come in August to do research. Gordon added that they will receive different answers at different times of the year. Cano agreed and suggested Shipyard look at doing two waves of interviews (during peak and off-peak seasons). Cano wondered what assets VSC will use if the co-ops for the Land of assets aren't renewed. Cartier replied that VSC will purchase the brand campaign assets, which are distinguished from the co-opted assets.

b.) **Unpacking SLO CAL**

Risser from Shipyard presented the new, long-form content series: Unpacking SLO CAL and showed the first episode featuring Suzi on the Move.

c.) **Breakout Sessions & Report-out**

In their breakout groups, attendees ideated about what SLO CAL activities to feature next. Each group came up with an episode by drawing the items that would be in the suitcase and presented their posters to the large group.

d.) **Social Media Strategy 2.0**

Belfour presented on the social strategy evolution using eight storytelling frameworks. Platform changes: no longer using X, now posting Instagram reels on TikTok.

Committee discussion –

Wambolt asked about the reasoning of moving away from twitter and adding TikTok. Cartier responded that VSC added TikTok to show up on platform although it is not a place where people book travel at this time and cross-posting does not require new content. Jacob asked about post frequency. Belfour responded that current posting frequency is 16 times a month on Instagram, but that is being increased to 18 times a month – which will be a mix of the eight pillars and trends/one-offs. Jacob also asked about influencers and Pinterest. Belfour replied that collaborator posts tend to dilute engagement and Pensara is taking time to learn the landscape on Pinterest before diving in.

e.) **Earned Media Strategy**

Gorgon went through ongoing earned media strategy: create media and influencer opportunities, integrate paid and owned channels, drive adoption of nomenclature, continue relationship building with local media. Tactics include awards/accolades, what's new in the destination, scalable media events, broadcast and podcase integrations and new partnerships and/or activations. Gorgon discussed partnership opportunities and submitting content to content calls.

Thielen from Shipyard presented partner co-op options: asset renewal, Unpacking episode inclusion and Sojern media buy.

Cartier shared that the VSC budget will be \$9 million as an organization for FY 24/25. Going back to a zero-base budget and no longer spending excess funds. Collaboration will help fill the gap.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion –

Jacob asked if destinations should decide which other destinations to partner with before co-oping on the Unpacking series. Cartier answered that that helps and to make sure to consider unexpected/outside of the box items. Haughey added that Shipyard is thinking about how to use this concept on the earned side too. Jacob wondered what assets can partners use if they co-op on Unpacking. Cartier replied all of them. Complete timing and cost will come back to the committee. Haughey added that the research piece could also be a co-op option. Cano asked, at 10k each, how many partners does VSC need to create another Unpacking episode. Cartier replied that VSC is considering creating two more episodes and are looking for at least two destinations in each episode. Johns asked how much can be spent with the Sojern matched funds co-op. Cartier replied that she cannot think of a limit.

13. Break

Skipped, moved on to item 14.

14. SLO CAL Nomenclature

Cartier walked through the nomenclature campaign which will continue running on social media, in movie theaters, gas station TV, etc. Cartier shared My SLO CAL assets with the committee members for their use.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

15. Sustainability

Cartier shared that sustainable travel is a growing trend and that travelers are actively seeking sustainable travel. VSC is looking to tell the Sustainably SLO CAL story and asked committee members for assistance in identifying partners/content that can be featured. Cartier shared the Pensara Surf Gems video as an example. Two sustainability videos are going to be filmed in March.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion –

Cano asked if staff already had the two partners for March selected. Cartier responded that yes, Couleur de la vie and Life Elements will be featured, but VSC is looking to film more next fiscal.

16. Wrap Up and Next Steps

Cartier confirmed that the May meeting will be held on May 14th and will include discussion of the Business & Marketing Plan and the budget. The Bash will be on May 17th at Rambling Spirits.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion –

Jacob requested the May Marketing Committee Meeting be rescheduled. Jacob also inquired what of the budget cuts will be coming out of the marketing budget. Cartier replied that about 15-20% will be cut. Wambolt asked if there will be more co-ops throughout the year. Cartier responded that to make it easier on staff admin and partners to budget, this year co-op opportunities were presented now. Cuming looked for clarification about the survey co-op and what co-op partners would receive. Cartier replied that they would be able to add questions to the survey, but staff is also open to other requests. Everyone will have access to the survey results.

17. Hosted Reception

Cartier released the committee for a hosted reception.

Next Meeting Marketing May 14, 2024

ADJOURN: 3:30 PM