



Visit SLO CAL Marketing Committee Meeting
Tuesday, November 14, 2023
8:30 am – 10:30 am
Visit SLO CAL Office – 81 Higuera Street, Suite 220, San Luis Obispo, CA

1. CALL TO ORDER

PRESENT: Ashlee Akers, Jim Allen, Molly Cano, Gordon Jackson, Joel Peterson, Lindsey Roberts, Linda Sanpei, Lynette Sonne, John Sorgenfrei, Jill Tweedie, Michael Wambolt

STAFF PRESENT: Cathy Cartier, Lisa Belsanti, Trevor Lynch, Kristen Carlson, Matt Halvorson, Alyssa Manno, Rachele Ramirez, Lauren Miller, Brooke Weisbecker, Mayla Lohnes, Megan Leininger, Theresa Nagai

OTHER PRESENT: Jacqui Clark-Charlesworth (Visit San Luis Obispo)

Call to order at 8:34am

2. PUBLIC COMMENT (On Non-Agenda Items)

Public Comment – None.

Committee Comment – None.

CONSENT AGENDA – *motion required*

3. Approval of September 12, 2023 Marketing Committee Minutes

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

ACTION: Moved by Wambolt/Peterson to approve the **September 12, 2023** Marketing Committee Minutes.

Motion Carried: 9: 0-1
(Tweedie abstained, Allen arrived after vote)

CMO REPORT

4. Visit SLO CAL CMO Report

Cartier shared that the finalized annual report is available in print and online. One copy was at each committee members seat along with the first SLO CAL Zine.

Cartier relayed that VSC's Dylan Efron "Home Again" campaign (across his YouTube, Instagram and TikTok) won a 2023 Gold Magellan Award.

Cartier updated the committee on The Gathering Summit conference where she was a speaker, sharing VSC video and how VSC is working to create a cult like brand. She highly recommended this as a marketing conference to consider attending in the future.

SLO CAL was highlighted in Meetings & Conventions Magazine in their November/December issue. This was an opportunity through Visit CA.

Cartier thanked committee members Allen and Banish for assisting with the VSC Staff Halloween Barbie themed costume contest.

Cartier informed the committee that Monopoly SLO CAL edition will be released next year. The company producing the game is looking for email suggestions for places that should be on the board. Marketing Committee Members (as well as the public) can submit their ideas to SLO@TOPTRUMPS.com

As a reminder, SLO CAL Open at Morro Bay has been moved this year from March to December. The SLO CAL Open at Pismo Beach is occurring normally scheduled (in January).

Cartier announced that VSC is creating new video content around 'SLO CAL Unique Experiences.' Currently, Hearst Castle and Sensorio videos have been filmed. Cartier played the Hearst Castle video for the committee and encouraged committee members to share any additional SLO CAL Experiences that visitors can only do in San Luis Obispo County. For clarification, VSC will still create SLO CAL Crafted, SLO CAL Culinary, etc.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Akers questioned if North of LA & South of the Bay is a new tagline going forward (as was shown in Meetings and Conventions Magazine). Cartier responded it's being used as a nomenclature play (defining SLO CAL is by what it is not).

Akers inquired how many SLO CAL Experiences videos VSC will produce in a year. Cartier shared that VSC will always create content but will know more about these videos specifically when next year is budgeted.

BUSINESS ITEMS

5. SLO CAL Summit

Cartier provided a SLO CAL Summit Recap. There were 216 people in attendance. For the first time local media covered the event. VSC is looking over 2024 dates now – with the event remaining in October. Staff is also looking into alternative location options that can accommodate more people. Overall, positive reviews from the post-event survey that was sent out, but staff is also looking into playing with the format of the programming.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – General positive feedback. Sonne commented that the speakers were very high quality.

6. Unpacking content Series

Cartier presented the Unpacking SLO CAL series. A series where a content creator/influencer will pick one of three suitcases and then use every item inside by finding the corresponding adventure/experiences throughout the county. Content will go out on influencer's social channels and VSC owned channels. This is a Shipyard series, but they hired Pensara as the production crew.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Akers asked when the content will be shared (while in market or after). Cartier replied that the final videos will be released after, but some behinds the scenes things will be shared at the time of filming. Akers requested that communities are tagged so that they can share on their channels.

7. My SLO CAL

Cartier shared the My SLO CAL video with the committee. This asset assists with building the brand from the bottom up – targeting a local audience. VSC is making a small local media buy to include weather sponsorships on KSBY and The CW, video spots in local movie theaters, on gas station TV and extend the reach of the program with new social reels on Facebook & Instagram (geofenced).

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Akers wondered if VSC will do a speaker circuit at Chamber events. Cartier confirmed that yes, this is in the plan. Akers suggested that VSC should let the partners know when they will be in each community, and they can assist in getting the word out.

8. Marketing Co-op Updates

Cartier gave a Marketing Co-ops update. Spartan and Denver co-ops are complete. VSC will work with each of participating destinations on the timing for the remaining campaigns.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Cano noted that City of SLO did not sign up for the Conde Nast co-op (as listed in the presentation).

9. Spartan Race Recap

Cartier shared a Spartan Race recap. The total race participation was up by 1,600 and activation was popular.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – None.

10. Key Market Activation

Cartier gave a Denver Key Market Activation recap. Coincided with PRWCA and Travel Paso's wine tasting trade and consumer event. The on-location media event included a SLO CAL Crafted pop-up. In conjunction with the activation there was also a House of Brands media blitz (focusing on co-op partners) and a trip giveaway. Have not heard back from the trip winner yet.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion – Akers requested a reminder on the Denver ad run duration. Cartier replied that the ads ran for approximately 2 weeks. Cano asked where the ad link went to. Cartier responded that they linked directly to the partner websites. Akers requested data on clicks.

Akers also inquired if there will there be a de-brief call with the team. Cartier responded that yes, VSC can do that. In relation to flow between the trade and the media events, Akers wondered if the media could come ahead next time. Cartier responded that VSC will set up that call to discuss more and to talk about any partner preferences between the Dallas (dinner) vs. Denver activation.

11. UX Study

Cartier informed the committee that the timeline for complete data has been pushed. A UX study update was given. The goal of the study is to see if visitors to the website can find the things they need and to see how the experience was.

Just finished the quantitative study. Next is the qualitative study and to analyze the data. Cartier shared initial findings. SLOCAL.com is performing well under things to do and places to visit. Highest attributes of the site are the ease of reading and the overall look and feel. Research found that the current layout and video slow download times on mobile. The pages least selected as most compelling are Plan Your Trip, SLOCAL Crafted and Sustainable SLOCAL. The lowest rated attributes are the navigation of menus/buttons and the trustworthiness of the information. To address these attributes, VSC needs to provide a scope – what can visitors do on site - and who is behind the site (a trustworthy source). The study and analysis will be done in the next few months.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion –

John Sorgenfrei shared that Pismo Beach CVB put Simpleview on notice that they are transitioning to WordPress and will run things internally. Sorgenfrei suggested adding a technical performance of the navigation to the study. Cartier addressed that there are some issues with Simpleview, and for Visit SLOCAL the CRM is important, and any transition would need to solve for this. Sorgenfrei and Akers previously worked with Tempest and saw similar issues. Peterson shared that PWRCA run their own site, which is beneficial because you aren't pigeonholed. Cartier confirmed that next steps are finishing the UX study, look at the issues it raises, considering what is next, what is the timeline (which would include at least a year for any transition) and what is the budget associated with all options. VSC will bring back those options to the committee.

Sonne wondered if there was any surprise that Plan Your Trip is least often selected? Cartier responded that it wasn't a surprise. Visitors often don't know how to utilize this resource and there is so much information on the website it can get lost.

Akers shared that they often anecdotally found that most people are using destination websites once they are already in market and wondered if that is the same for VSC. Cartier replied that VSC will share any findings.

Cano shared that from the partner perspective, it would be helpful to see if partner hand-offs are in the right spot. She also acknowledged that this study is focused on the user experience. Cartier offered that this is one of the reasons paid media co-ops are now direct links (for increase hand-offs and an easier user journey).

Sorgenfrei suggested VSC also looks at a website platform that could support the video since VSC has great video assets. Cartier wrapped up the conversation sharing that VSC will come back to this discussion in January.

12. Marketing ESC 2050 & Travel Trade Update

Lohnes recapped the PR mixer at Firestone Walker in Paso and shared that the next event is planned for December. Belsanti encouraged everyone to submit to the New York Times Newsletter section “Love Letters to California” series. Morro Bay was recently featured. Lohnes presented a recent FAM recap. Belsanti highlighted the Arcadia FAM that was in partnership with Visit CA. Belsanti presented Master Chef Junior “Under the Sea” challenge prize which will include a 15-30 second on-air SLO CAL mention. The episode will air in spring/fall. Master Chef Junior have more viewership than Master Chef. Staff is currently working on putting the prize trip together.

Halvorson provided an update on owned media. In addition to the UX Study, staff have updated the events submission flow and are seeking out event organizers to put their events on the SLO CAL website. Staff is creating an email management strategy (including adding additional opt-out categories). Staff is improving internal asset management and creating a system which will help VSC share assets with partners. And staff is working on site optimization and an editorial strategy including conducting audits and implementing keyword research.

Halvorson delivered website performance data. He also shared upcoming SLO CAL Crafted video releases and notes about optimizing the release schedule. Recent SSC video releases include Ember Restaurant & CASS Winery.

Halvorson went over recent consumer newsletter performance. Halvorson also gave an update on social media and how staff works to spread out the content across partners, categories and across the county. Numbers are slightly down, but that’s because the last few months were so high performing. Top performing posts are listicles.

Lynch provided an update on Paid Media Campaign performance. Currently running the always-on campaign, and the video completion rate is very high. Over the next several months, VSC Acacia videos will be cut down into 30 second spots and will go into paid media where appropriate. Custom Content is driving great engagement on platforms such as Pinterest, Pandora and the Conde Nast e-blast. Spend will taper off in November and December, and ramp back up in January and February.

Carlson updated the committee on October tradeshow: California Luxury Forum in West Hollywood, IMEX America in Las Vegas and VRMA Conference in Orlando. At Luxury Forum Carlson found that customers are looking for small boutique properties with curated experiences in luxury and not big-box hotels – which is great for SLO CAL.

Carlson shared that the Countywide Sales Strategy was kicked off November 1. VSC is working with Travel Tourism Consultant GUXO, LLC and will have the final strategy in the new year.

Cartier gave a brief overview of VSC's IPW installation ideas. Staff has submitted a creative brief and product ideas. Visit CA puts the activation together. VSC is waiting to hear back from Visit CA about next steps.

Cartier reminded committee members that the Marketing Committee Retreat date was updated to Tuesday, March 5th (to avoid a conflict with Outlook Forum). Staff is looking at venues in north County and is open to ideas.

Public Comment – None.

Committee Discussion –

Cano questioned why SLO is not on the SLO CAL Crafted video list. Cartier responded that staff has worked hard to ensure that all communities are represented, and this list does not include those that have already been released. Additionally, VSC will be creating more, so if committee members have SLO CAL Crafted partners with a good story to tell, please share (reach out to Manno).

Sonne shared that it would be nice to see more farms. Akers inquired where all the SCC videos can be viewed. Cartier replied that they are all on YouTube and staff will share the complete spreadsheet of videos, release timing and SCC criteria. Sonne suggested re-running some that were released a while ago. Halvorson added that in addition to YouTube, these videos have been integrated into the website. Cartier called attention to the fact that all the videos have subtitles so they can be played in lobbies without sound.

Next Meeting January 9, 2024

ADJOURN: 10:04 AM.