Minutes

Visit San Luis Obispo County Marketing Committee

Visit San Luis Obispo County Marketing Committee
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, August 11, 2015
8:30am-10:30am
Courtyard by Marriott
1605 Calle Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, CA 93405

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Chuck Davison

PRESENT: Jim Allen, Ashlee Akers, Terrie Banish, Judith Bean, Molly Cano, Cheryl Cuming, Amanda Diefenderfer, Christen Goldie, Brent Haugen, Heather Muran, Jennifer Porter, John Sorgenfrei

STAFF PRESENT: Chuck Davison, Jordan Carson, Kylee Jepsen, Brendan Pringle

Call to Order at 8:34am.

2. **PUBLIC COMMENT (On Non-Agenda Items)**
None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS
Davison noted that we are continuing our search for a Marketing Director. The detailed description is posted on the "Jobs" page of VisitSanLuisObispoCounty.com. We are looking for someone with experience in: managing or directing an advertising/marketing/branding agency, developing and managing SEO and SEM campaigns, working with a CRM, developing strategies for and executing social media, managing or overseeing media buys by the agency, managing a robust website, working with a booking engine, managing a market research company and executing a research program, etc. We appreciate any qualified referrals you might be able to provide.

BUSINESS ITEMS

3. **Website Booking Engine Strategy**

Visit San Luis Obispo County currently uses JackRabbit's referral system, but is seeking other website booking engine options. The four different options up for discussion are 1) maintaining a referral system like JackRabbit; 2) a custom-built system; 3) an OTA Model (e.g. Booking.com), or to eliminate the booking engine from the website altogether. Jack Rabbit has been ineffective; it doesn't track reservations, and is a broken model. Creating a custom-built system could be costly and time consuming. Visit San Luis Obispo County's competitors in Santa Barbara and Monterey are using the OTA model. Davison asked the Marketing Committee for recommendations.

Board Discussion. Diefenderfer pointed out that Paso Robles is not currently using a booking engine because they felt the money could be put to better use in other areas of the budget. Cano commented that building a custom system is not an easy process. Davison noted that there is no "one size fits all" model, and that the same constituents who don't currently use the current model will likely not use a new model. Muran and Cuming commented that funds would be better spent in other areas of the marketing budget, and Sorgenfrei suggested that a change will upset some people and to hold off.

Public Comment – None.

4. **CRM & Website Strategy**

Visit San Luis Obispo County currently uses a custom Customer Relationship Management (CRM) managed by Kraftwerk, who designed the Visit San Luis Obispo County website. The website is only two years old, but a possible re-skin to the home page is a possibility. Visit San Luis Obispo County is currently in discussions with Simpleview, who manages SEO for the site. Another option is a robust CRM product such as Salesforce. The Kraftwerk model is not a good long-term solution as it is custom and many changes and updates have to be managed by them. Visit San Luis Obispo County is looking to replace it going forward. A local DMO has requested consideration of a countywide CRM for use by other DMOs.

Board Discussion. Haugen commented that it's necessary for DMOs, lodging, attractions and restaurants to interact with Visit San Luis Obispo County. The Marketing Committee discussed how there would need to be a balance, where members were given enough space to submit content, but not too much space.

Public Comment – None.

5. **Research Campaign Strategy**

Visit San Luis Obispo County will be conducting two different studies: 1) Demographic & Share-of-Wallet (Post-Trip) Study and 2) Awareness Study (Southern California/San Francisco Bay Area). For the Demographic & Share-of-Wallet study, Visit San Luis Obispo County would reach out to the lodging community for data such as zip code in order to gather the information. For the Awareness Study, the organization would be looking at what people are coming or not coming to San Luis Obispo County. One of the purposes of the first study is to be able to market the county to like-minded communities. The timing recommendation for the studies has been moved to the first six months of 2016.

Board Discussion. Porter recommended that the Share-of-Wallet study be conducted in the first quarter and third quarter. Davison responded that once the model was built, it would be easy to duplicate it six months later. Sorgenfrei commented that communities might be looking for co-op opportunities, as this would provide a mutual benefit and create more engagement. Davison agreed that co-op would be available. Davison noted that part of the challenge in collecting data is San Luis Obispo County's unique lodging mix. Catalyst will be providing more feedback on the facilitation of these studies at the end of the month.

Public Comment – None.

6. **Countywide Icon Usage**

Visit San Luis Obispo County has had discussions on the use of a countywide icon for use across all DMO channels, connecting communities together through advertising to our customers, and is asking for recommendations of the Marketing Committee. Davison asked if DMO's were even willing to entertain the concept. One idea is a map of California with San Luis Obispo County highlighted in green.

Board Discussion. Committee members agreed that the use of an icon to link the communities was important so that customers could better understand proximity of communities. Cano recommended the use of a line of text, as opposed to a map and Sorgenfrei agreed that a map would be tough to implement. Haugen suggested the use of a hashtag. Davison commented that Visit San Luis Obispo County would be asking Catalyst to produce some options.

Public Comment – None.

7. **Digital Asset Management (DAM) System**

Visit San Luis Obispo County is currently researching options for a Digital Asset Management (DAM) system. This would be a countywide warehouse of digital assets for requests from media, travel trade, etc, in which each community would

upload, control and have access to their own inventory warehouse. Davison asked if this was a concept that the DMO's would be willing to consider, and asked the Marketing Committee as a whole for their recommendations.

Board Discussion. Sorgenfrei commented on the importance of having photo credits on all photos for media use, and on using a system that is easy to both submit and access data. Jepsen noted that the system under consideration allows tagging, which makes it easy to find photos. VSLOC will continue to explore options and will come back to the group with additional information in the coming months.

Public Comment – None.

8. Visit CA 2016 State Visitor's Guide Co-Op

Visit San Luis Obispo County has purchased a 2-page spread (valued at $73,000) in the 2016 California State Visitor's Guide, published by Visit California in partnership with *Sunset*. Visit San Luis Obispo County is buying down the space and offering a co-op to 6 partners at a discounted rate of $6500/partner (regularly $9,964). Morro Bay, Pismo Beach, San Luis Obispo, Wine Coast Country, and Ayres are participating. One open space remains.

Board Discussion. Bean announced that the City of Arroyo Grande would like to purchase the last remaining space.

Public Comment – None.

PRESENTATION

9. Catalyst Marketing

Members of the Catalyst Marketing Team introduced themselves to the Marketing Committee (Mark Astone, CEO; Bob Bates, Division President; Vikki Pass, Media Director; Paul Rippens, Director of Client Services; Whitney Bechert, Account Executive; Jeff Hentz, Director of Tourism Strategy & Development). They discussed their 90-Day Timeline, which included work on competitive analysis and stakeholder interviews.

Davison commented that Visit San Luis Obispo County hopes to have a contract with Catalyst finalized soon, and noted that Mark Astone agreed to reduce their agency fee from 13% to 12.5%. Davison also commented on how Catalyst continues to provide added value.

Catalyst discussed their media strategy, which is defined by three objectives: 1) increase awareness of SLO County, 2) drive demand and increase overnight stays, and 3) drive traffic to VisitSanLuisObispoCounty.com. They asked the committee for their insight on primary target audiences for the destination.

Muran responded that it was 35-69 year olds from San Francisco, Los Angeles, the Central Valley, and San Diego. Diefenderfer added that millennials are also a target audience, as SLO County falls into their budget, and that this demographic is always seeking a "different" experience.

Akers added that the "outdoors" lifestyle demographic was also an important one. Haugen suggested looking more at these types of "lifestyle" groups, as Morro Bay has done.

Catalyst discussed the results they found in their research through Scarborough, and identified San Francisco, Los Angeles, and the Central Valley as their three different primary targets with Phoenix and Las Vegas as secondary targets due to direct flight access in or close to the county. Catalyst noted that they will use zoning to make sure the budget is spent efficiently, as some areas are more prone to come here than others. They discussed how they would be running television ads one month in the fall, and one month in the spring. As for print, they will be doing everything as co-ops so that they can run a half page ad or larger for maximum impact. Some digital ads will be running year-round, with a smaller budget

level in the summer to supplement their campaign. Facebook ads will be hyper-targeted and geo-targeted to all five markets, with messaging varying based on the market.

Sorgenfrei suggested looking more at digital print (Los Angeles Times, OC Register, etc). He added that radio is important for the Los Angeles target, and that he would like to see more video ads.

Catalyst discussed the use of a Prizm study to identify demographic and behavior type segments, and how this could be started September 1, 2015. The cost would be $28,000-$35,000, and would require buy-in from stakeholders to be effective.

Diefenderfer mentioned that smaller hotels and vacation rentals have difficulty getting this info. Davison commented on Morro Bay's effectiveness in collecting this data, and suggested that this could serve as a model.

Public Comment – Mark Eads of Pismo Beach commented that Pismo Beach lodging community would definitely be interested in participating as it would help them better identify their target.

Davison encouraged members to provide feedback to Catalyst in their meetings with Catalyst.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 10:45am.

AGENDA

Visit San Luis Obispo County Marketing Committee

Visit San Luis Obispo County Marketing Committee Agenda
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1. **CALL TO ORDER**

2. **PUBLIC COMMENT (On Non-Agenda Items)**

BUSINESS ITEMS	C. Davison

3. **Website Booking Engine Strategy**

4. **CRM & Website Strategy**

5. **Research Campaign Strategy**

6. **Countywide Icon Usage**

7. **Digital Asset Management (DAM) System**

8. **Visit CA 2016 State Visitor's Guide Co-Op**

PRESENTATION	M. Astone

9. **Catalyst Marketing**

ADJOURN.

Brown Act Notice: Each speaker is limited to two minutes of public comment for items not on the agenda. Public comment for each agenda item will be called for separately and is also limited to 2 minutes per speaker. State law does not allow the board to discuss or take action on issues not on the agenda, except that members of the board may briefly respond to statements made or questions posed by the person giving public comment. Staff may be directed by the board to follow-up on such items and/or place them on the next board agenda. The order of agenda items is listed for reference and items may be taken in any order deemed appropriate by the Board of Directors.

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