



PASSPORT TO
OPPORTUNITY

**BUSINESS
INFORMATION AND
TOOLS TO NAVIGATE
THE EVER-CHANGING
MARKETPLACE**

VOLUME 4, NO. 1

Wrapping up travel packages and the Web

The race is on to create seamless travel packages and products. Today's customers are driving this race. The days of do-it-yourselfers continue to dwindle. The consumers of today are time-starved, overloaded with information while wanting simple and seamless experiences. This is especially true with vacation travel. Customers want to research their vacation, access information and resources as needed, make a buying decision and get to their vacation emotionally as quickly as possible.



Destinations throughout North America need to facilitate this process with their members and travel suppliers to stay competitive in the marketplace.

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WHERE IN THE
WORLD IS THE
OPPORTUNITY GUY

APRIL:

Lancaster, Penn.
Chicago, Ill.
Los Angeles, Calif.
New Orleans, La.
Billings, Mont.
Albuquerque, N.M.

MAY:

San Diego, Calif.
Savannah, Ga.
Seattle, Wash.
Kenai Peninsula,
Alaska
Dutch Harbor, Alaska

JUNE:

Philadelphia, Penn.
Bozeman, Mont.
Chicago, Ill.
Louisville, Ky.
San Francisco, Calif.



Dear Colleagues & Friends:

It has been a while since my last newsletter. I am not sure if I have been spending too much time with my inner entrepreneur or too much time on the road. However, something happened the first of

the year. As the clock struck midnight and we said goodbye to 2003, there seemed to be a large influx of optimism in the Marketplace. DMOs, travel suppliers and operators have been more hopeful! This has been also true for consumers.

In January, according to discussions with USTOA and the Caribbean Tourism Organization, the fourth quarter of 2003 saw signs of advanced booking and early deposits not seen in two and a half years. Consumers were eager to not just get away but take a real vacation. This optimism has also played out with DMOs, travel suppliers and operators. There is a new spirit and hope that the Industry is finally turning around or at least turning a corner.

Economic signs are continuing on an upswing, and business investment is now consistent after two quarters in 2003 and projections of a 10% increase overall for 2004. Business travelers, although still cautious, are venturing out and traveling more. According to the American Express Travel Index, consumers are looking to increase their spending on vacation. Lots of good news for the Industry.

According to TIA, the summer travel season is projected to be the best in the past several years. Domestic trip volume for 2004 will increase between 2.5-3.5%.

In addition, first tier gateways are seeing airport passenger numbers surpass levels of 2000 & 2001. The cruise industry that continues to add capacity is absorbing and filling cabins at higher rates and yields. Hotel reservations and operator bookings are also up.

However, news events in recent weeks relating to Iraq, the presidential election, gas prices and terrorist threats are adding bits of apprehension into the marketplace. Will these incidents have small or large consequences for the market? In order to hedge against sudden changes, I believe the best strategy is to have a balanced approach to consumers and your market segments. Product offerings should include both the regional drive market and long-haul jet markets. You must have a range of offerings to satisfy both the high and middle segments of your markets.

In order to ensure a successful year and to keep the optimism going for 2004, I believe one of my favorite quotes is appropriate. "The road to success is always under construction." (Author unknown)

To continued success and optimism for 2004,

Joe Veneto



The Opportunity Guy



BITS & PIECES

- One of the emerging trends I cite regularly for the group market of the future is the concept of boutique groups. These are small groups of travelers 10, 12, 15, no more than 20, that want a small group experience. These will be more upscale clients willing to pay for exclusive experiences that are behind the scenes, VIP and unique.

One of the newest entrants into the small group arena is a product called Road Scholars. These are small group vacations focused on learning experiences throughout the world. They are being developed by Elderhostel, known for their trips worldwide, whose members' stay in college dormitories. It seems some inquiring minds want a little comfort with their learning experiences....

- I noticed a recent ad in the *New York Times* for www.luggagefree.com.

This is a company that will pick up your luggage, wrap it in plastic and send it ahead of you so it will be waiting at your destination upon arrival. The ad apologizes, however, saying you still have to carry your emotional baggage with you....

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On-line travel companies have been creating more complex package products on the Web over the past year in primary destinations. They realize they are not able to remain profitable selling the commodities of air, hotels and rental cars. These companies are wrapping up destinations to provide visitors what they want seamlessly; however, local DMOs that are the equivalent of Google for their destination need to be facilitating this process for both members and visitors.

On the Web there are currently three different models being used. The first model is called Posting. This occurs when travel suppliers wrap up vacation packages and post them to a DMO's Web site. Consumers click on icons that display a package. They then have the ability to connect to a supplier site for added information, e-mail a request or pick up the phone and book a reservation.

A recent packaging project with Glacier Country, Montana, and Opportunities Unlimited created

themed packages that are now posted to their Web site. The cities of Whitefish and Missoula were the destination anchors for the packages. The DMO's goals were to increase visitation and make it easy for customers to book a vacation with travel suppliers. The initiative was driven by the Glacier Country regional DMO. For a sample of posted packages go to www.glaciermt.com.

The second model is called Outsourcing. This occurs when a DMO wants to provide consumers with the ability to book travel on-line and provides the service through an on-line travel company such as Travel Hero, Travelocity, Expedia etc. This model, however, wraps up pri-

marily commodity products such as air, hotel and rental cars. It provides a service but is not very compelling. The packages do not get customers to experience the depth and breath of a destination's products and services.

The third model is called Dynamic Packaging. This occurs when a DMO or travel supplier adds a booking engine onto a Web site to provide an integrated solution to select and directly book a package on line. Consumers have the ability to select dates and package parameters on line, as well as add optional features. Some sites use templates of packages with options while others employ a shopping cart methodology adding features one by one. Examples of destination sites with dynamic packaging include www.mesacvb.com, www.sandiego.org, and www.bloomingtonmn.com.

While an on-line packaging solution is necessary to be competitive in the marketplace, just connecting the dots or products is not enough. DMOs need to tap into the DNA of their destination. This involves incorporating the intrinsic qualities of the destination that resonate with consumers' interests and affinities.

Opportunities Unlimited is currently partnering with a number of DMOs to wrap up their destinations in a compelling way to connect with consumers' interests and affinities. Current destinations include Glacier Country, Montana; Savannah, Georgia; and Dutch Harbor, Alaska, to name a few. We have a variety of packaging programs for DMOs and travel suppliers that are customized to create results with direct consumers and various market segments. In today's consumer-driven marketplace, wrapping up travel packages on line is not optional, it is imperative!



Planit Philadelphia



Several years ago when speaking at a tourism conference in Minnesota, I was asked by suppliers and DMOs what should be done to meet the needs of Tour Operators, Motorcoach companies and Receptive Operators. My reply was, "Embrace the Web and develop B to B

(business to business) solutions that create fast, seamless on-line solutions to speed access and efficiencies for customers."

Last fall the Philadelphia CVB launched a revolutionary Web site called "Planit Philadelphia." It is a Web-based itinerary builder for groups that allows group tour planners to create exciting customized trips.

A sample list of features includes:

- Selecting trip days & dates of departure to build an itinerary
- Choosing from a variety of different themes to allow new ways to visit the city
- Downloading and customizing itineraries for brochures, group members, guides or drivers
- Customizing a profile and saving multiple itineraries
- Choosing from hundreds of attractions based on preselected themes to request reservations and information.

Sam Rogers and his team at the Philadelphia CVB have put themselves in their customers' shoes to anticipate every aspect of a travel planner's needs. Go to www.pcvb.org/planit and experience the future; it's here!

"Togetherring"

Last October, while reading the on-line e-zines, I came across a press release by Randy Garfield, Executive VP at Walt Disney Parks & Resorts. Disney was introducing a new vacation product niche called Disney's Grand Gatherings. Based on the trend and desire of traveling with extended family members and friends in small groups, Disney now customizes Grand Gatherings for parties of eight or more to vacation at Walt Disney World.

The product includes new services, package options and seamless booking procedures.

A few weeks later while speaking at the Nebraska Governor's Conference on Tourism, I heard Peter Yesawich, CEO of YPBR in Orlando, identify the trend of Togetherring. Based on the most recent Travel Monitor, the number one intended vacation activity is catching up with friends and relatives.

Peter said, "Almost eight in ten active travelers took at least one vacation with extended family, other family or friends during the past five years." He said, "This trend is expected to grow in the years ahead as more families seek additional time and experiences together." This is especially true in light of the importance of family in the post 9/11 culture. At the end of Peter's presentation I asked him if there was any connection between the new Disney product and the Togetherring trend. He said, "We did the research for Disney."

The following day as I was leaving Omaha, I picked up a copy of the *USA Today* and in the paper was an eight-page color insert introducing Disney's Magical Grand Gatherings.

As I speak to DMOs about wrapping up products and services to create compelling packages, family vacations need to be part of the mix. What is your organization doing to position family and multi-generational travel by family and friends to capitalize on this hot travel trend?



What's up on the Web: Webervations

Are you a small-to mid-sized travel or tourism business? Or perhaps a micro-entrepreneur looking to not just have a Web presence but also create an e-commerce site for your customers?

Last month while speaking at the Professional Association of International Innkeepers conference, I was introduced to a company called Webervations. They provide on-line e-commerce solutions for travel businesses that have inventory and want to sell their products and services cost effectively over the Web.

Several Innkeepers and B&Bs use Webervations technology to load packages, room inventory, add features and even book gift certificates. During the on-line demonstration, I also saw an example of a doctor's office that uses the technology to book and schedule appointments.

Webervations provides affordable and flexible on-line availability that seamlessly integrates to a Web site. There are no commissions or booking fees! It is easy to use and very affordable. Go to www.webervations.com.

Consumer Trends

Recently released trends from YBPR in Orlando, Florida, on consumers' shows people are very concerned about getting the best price for travel. A recent press release that was part of the 2004 National Travel Monitor also showcased the following data on what consumers feel is the best source for travel information and prices:

| | WEB | SUPPLIERS | TRAVEL AGENTS |
|------|-----|-----------|---------------|
| 2002 | 38% | 33% | 29% |
| 2003 | 58% | 22% | 20% |
| 2004 | 56% | 21% | 21% |

This is great insight into consumer behavior and travel purchasing.

To receive press releases go to www.ybpr.com.

Source: © 2004 YPBR Travel Monitor

Prize Package and a Funky Festival

Me, Thee & 33

From the Mountain View Inn in the Laurel Highlands of Pennsylvania. This package is a quick getaway for people who need a break and prefer a pair of horses to a bucket of bubbly. The Mountain View teamed up with the folks of Latrobe brewery. It features:

- Overnight accommodations
- A bucket of rocks — Rolling Rocks, that is
- \$33 in meal vouchers for the restaurant
- Rolling Rock gifts that include two tee shirts, a set of Rolling Rock glasses, bottle opener and, of course, Me & Thee!

Go to www.mountainviewinn.com. Kudos on creativity!

The Honfest, celebrating all things Bawlimer

Where else than the state of Maryland, close to the town that made Hairspray the movie and the now popular Broadway play a household name, would they have a Honfest? It is a festival celebrating the music, clothes and lifestyle of the '50s and '60s. Denise Whiting the owner of the Café Hon, started the festival ten years ago.

Last fall while at the Maryland Tourism Conference, attendees were treated to a '50s night, one of the best ever! In addition to the band, the Howard Hons were in attendance. These are a group of women all decked out in '50s and '60s clothing, and they are the real deal. Seems this is a local social group that follows Rock n' Roll bands. "Hon" is local code and is short for honey. People use the term hon in conversational language. For more information, go to www.honfest.net. Since they have a festival, I suggest wrapping it up as a vacation package. This has Boomer written all over it!

BY
POPULAR
DEMAND

The Power of Travel Packaging

I am pleased to report that at the beginning of August I will be releasing a new travel product called "The Power of Travel Packaging." It is a manual designed to assist DMOs, travel suppliers (hotels, inns, B&Bs, attractions, etc.) create and develop compelling travel package products for consumers. After receiving multiple requests throughout North America, after my presentations, for a hands-on manual, there is now a definitive guide.

The manual provides all the elements necessary to profit from the power of travel packaging. Sample topics include designing compelling packages, pricing

strategies, package delivery, package distribution channels, etc. The binder also includes samples of worksheets, resources and successful package models.

The manual will sell for \$249. A pre-release special is now available for \$199. The binder will ship the middle of August.

THE MANUAL INCLUDES:

Chapter 1: What Can Travel Packaging Do for My Business?

Chapter 2: How Do I Design Compelling Travel Packages That People Will Buy?

Chapter 3: What is the Strategy for Pricing My Packages Correctly?

Chapter 4: How Do I Manage the Delivery of My Packages?

Chapter 5: How Can I Extend my Reach into Multiple Distribution Channels?

Chapter 6: What Can I Do to Successfully Market and Promote My Packages?

Appendix: Packaging Development Tools and Templates



To order on line or
download a registration form,
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A CHANGE IN NEWSLETTER DELIVERY

Passport to Opportunities is going from print to electronic beginning with our next issue. We will be sending the newsletter out as an e-zine six times a year rather than four. There will also be periodic white papers and special articles. In order to receive our next newsletter you will need to opt in at www.opportunityguy.com. There will be an icon on the home page that says newsletter. Please note your privacy

will be protected, and we will not release, sell or share your information with anyone else.

**Please remember to opt in at
www.opportunityguy.com by
August 1, 2004, so you will not miss a beat or an opportunity!**



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