

## GACVB Local Leaders Meeting #3

### SALES Professionals

4/17/2020

As part of a bi-monthly Friday series, GACVB moderated a virtual experience of facetime and strategy input for destination sales directors and team members

#### Group Sales Panelists:

Bruce Johnson, Explore Gwinnett  
Kevin Udell and Maria Trammell, Jekyll Island Authority  
Ashley Woitena, VisitColumbusGA  
Steven Schumacher – Discover Dunwoody

#### Industry Partner Guests (non-DMO):

Cheryl Hargrove/Lacey Cameron, Explore Georgia  
Monica Smith, Southeast Tourism Society (STS)  
David Wright, Religious Conference Management Association (RCMA)

#### Attendees/Participants:

56 CVB/DMO Group Sales staff members in meetings/convention market

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#### Bruce Johnson, Explore Gwinnett

- Are you currently actively selling? NO
  - Reaching out for personal connections, empathy & understanding, not the time to cold call or sell
  - Keeping in touch with partners / Checking in on our customers
  - Using Knowland to future prospect: fall & winter
    - Looking at what booked last year in similar areas to go after
    - NOT reaching out now, just gathering info
- Zoom meeting w/ Hotel DOS's
  - Allowed hotel to share what they are doing and vice versa
  - Being present, being accessible
- Call w/ Expedia to discuss and April 10<sup>th</sup> first time bookings outreach cancellations
  - Transient will pick up first - Transient business looks to come back in the fall then groups on the small and local level. Possibly corporate to follow.
  - Local & regional travel, in-state
- Encourage hotels to look at business they may not typically like
  - Government may be first to come back
  - Also target tour & travel

- How are you telling your story to partners, leadership, board?
  - Communication is even more important and to share impact of your organization
    - Have to be out of site but don't be out of mind
  - Written weekly recap to share with board on what doing
    - Want to know the goods: rebooking, trends, business atmosphere
  - Peers referral program?
    - Working with marketing team
    - Understand everyone will be scratching for business right away
    - Next year: demand may outpace supply
      - Things rebooked from spring/summer taking over fall
      - If that happens what happens with fall events?
        - Need to have an incentive in place to help encourage referrals
    - Let's work together to refer business when we can

#### **Kevin Udel & Maria Trammell, Jekyll Island Authority**

- What trends do you see?
  - Corporate was first to drop
  - Looking at transient to come back first
  - All government business cancelled up to Jul 1st to coincide with their fiscal year
  - People are rescheduling
- Post Pandemic Marketing?
  - Several hotels have closed / Open ones have 1-2 rooms
  - Marketing already has a plan
    - Instead of Disney may travel w/in state
    - Staycation
  - When you're ready...
    - Bike ride around the island
    - Created Zoom backgrounds for use / coastal views/sunsets, etc
- Jekyll is focusing more on GA travel b/c make most revenue on GA. Investing more marketing funds within Georgia.
- Check out [website](#) for examples of the messages currently sending out

#### **Ashely Woitena, VisitColumbusGA**

- Marketing strategy?
  - Not actively selling, in the building "relationships" business
  - Become a community asset; uplift the community
  - 4 Pillar Concept
    - Tracking lost business

- Conversion of what is rebooking
    - August is seeing some traction 27% conversion
    - Fall is looking good
  - Team engagement: from the top down, doing virtual calls, and it's not so much work oriented, just checking in
  - What are we doing for the front-line people?
  - Recovery- what type of meeting will they be hosting
  - Client engagement – outreach to 3rd party meeting planners
- Telling your story?
  - research-based data to talk to the board, partners, etc.
  - Weekly reports to board
  - Be the community partner
    - Promoting who is open for curbside, to-go drinks, etc.
- Hotel trends?
  - 5 hotels have closed through end of June: one big family of properties
    - Marriott
    - Double tree
    - Main Downtown Properties
  - STR report
    - Have switched to weekly report to see peak days and weekly trends
    - Economy hotels are doing the best right now
    - Encouraging rate integrity with hotels
    - 30% occupancy
  - Midscale and Economy properties are doing the best
  - Military families are still visiting even though graduations are live-streamed

### **Steven Schumacher - Dunwoody**

- Team restructuring & how will affect travel/tradeshows?
  - Team is taking two days off and offset w/ PTO at first
    - Now having to look at unpaid days
  - For marketing stay relevant- slashed looking for Q2
    - Cut 1/3 of budget
  - Sales is still planning on traveling to conferences & tradeshows, esp. Fall & Winter to let clients know that they still want their business
- Marketing after Pandemic?
  - Currently “everything will be OK”
  - Possibly switch to “everything is OK”
  - Ready to push what to do, but want to get the hotels open
  - COMMUNICATION is key! We're out of site, don't be out of mind! Better to over share what your CVB is doing.

- Hotel closings? Occupancy? Exceptions?
    - 7 hotels in Dunwoody total- all still open
      - Crowne Plaza almost closed but made decision not to
    - Large Hotel Occupancy 5-7%
    - Limited same
    - Extended Stay brands are in 20% (much smaller # rooms)
      - Staybridge went to construction sites and lower quality and put business cards on windshields & won business
    - Strategy- prep for dooms day April & May 5% revenue
      - April, May, June 82% loss overall
    - We are depending on the hotels for their forecasts
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### **PANEL WIDE: What has Sales team done above & beyond?**

**Kevin/Maria** - Sponsored April GSAE virtual luncheon

- had everyone submit video to show the GSAE network family love to be highlighted at the end of the call

**Steven**- Using our 'Everything will be OK' (Arts Gallery) sign

- using the sign around the SE to raise money for arts; made national news; put in front of hotels; planners were asking for them
- sent Everything will be OK t-shirts to meeting planners

Use LinkedIn more and share stories; maybe pay out of pocket to upgrade

**Ashley**- Communication has been key for hotels, conf call with attractions to learn concerns

- deliveries to frontline workers at hotels by our leadership

**Bruce**- Sales team has been going out to visit hoteliers –

- delivering hand sanitizers to properties and pizzas for hotel staff lunches
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**Future topics of discussion:** Sports recruitment market; changes in hotel management - housekeeping, former green initiatives, onsite dining; Planners expectations – what will planners want from meetings in the future

**\*Future training to include COVID crisis recovery content. The GACVB and STS joint Sales Symposium is still on for November 30<sup>th</sup>.**

**\*\*Special thank you to Trish Whitley and Ann Starley, Visit Macon and Melanie Grace, VisitColumbusGA for the detailed notes of the meeting.**