

## **A Special PR Information Message from Pineapple Public Relations – March 20, 2020**

As mentioned, and as we all know so well, things are changing by the minute. I wrote this at the beginning of the week, and now, we are hearing from several of our friends in the media that they are exhausted and overwhelmed with information, so I'm revising this to say that unless something is specifically related to covid-19, hit the pause button for a few days. Influencers and local broadcast may continue to be a good resource at this time but follow a respectful and relevant protocol. Whether traditional media or influencer, and this is a good general rule regardless, no blast or mass distributions, particularly now. Customize and reach out individually so media know you are specifically taking care to approach them. If you have some go-to media, contacts check in with them about how they are doing and if they would still like to receive relevant information. I know we all want to do something to preserve whatever business we have, just be mindful and super targeted and pause on that pitch unless it is 100 percent relevant.

Thoughts and ideas below are still a good roadmap for planning over the next few weeks, just temper it with personalization, sensitivity and good judgement – again with caveat that things are changing by the hour!

**Take a deep breath and plant your feet firmly on the ground; you've got this.**

### **Stay Visible and Top of Mind for two reasons:**

- 1) As DMOs you are leaders in your community. As such it is important to maintain a presence to instill confidence among your residents, businesses and potential visitors.
- 2) People will be planning travel and looking ahead ready to get out and about as soon as they can. You want to be there and top of mind when they start planning!

**Be Sensitive and Relevant:** Be very aware of the current environment so that messages are supportive and sensitive. Maintain a "look forward to welcoming you back" message and tone as you do not want to be seen as encouraging travel now when government and health leaders are requesting that people practice social distancing for the greater good #flattenthecurve.

**Stay Ready:** It may not seem like it now, but this too shall pass. It may look different, and the more engaged you are now, the more prepared you will be for the "new normal." Prepare your staff, your constituents and local businesses with a plan to maintain messaging now and be ready to re-emerge as people start moving around again.

**What does this look like from communication standpoint?** Right now we are developing communication plans one-to-two weeks at a time to allow for complete flexibility.

**For the immediate moment this is what we are hearing:** We have conducted outreach to our media contacts and received incredible insight from Ketchum PR about travel media needs during this time.

After speaking with 100 top-tier media, Ketchum PR determined that 84% were still covering travel topics. 80% of those write for travel specific media and 60% of those write for other media

**With this being said, the travel messaging has changed,** so the big question and challenge is how do you approach sharing your message while being relevant and sensitive to COVID-19 impact?

**Through research and daily interaction with media, this is what we have heard they are interested in covering:**

Community human interest and feel good stories (restaurants or local businesses helping out in communities, elderly, schools). Stories that support and feature local businesses – Who are the community leaders and what unique or new steps/services are they offering to adjust to COVID-19 impact? Restaurants and curbside dining are a prime example of this as are unique retail programs encouraging local shopping.

Help entertain, educate and keep individuals and families occupied by showcasing the unique assets and interesting experiences in your destination. Does your local museum have a virtual tour? Can you share with media a video of an outdoor attraction?

Postponed or cancelled festivals or events – while it may seem counterintuitive, your events and festivals that have been postponed or cancelled provide a good opportunity to produce content and messaging around the theme of, “looking forward to welcoming you back.” As an example, one of our clients does a “Birds of Prey” show – a video segment that captures a condensed version of the show and an educational component will be sent out with the message, “we look forward to welcoming you back.” Another example is a storytelling festival that was postponed. Again, a video of people reading stories that can be shared with families with the, “we look forward to welcoming you back” messaging will keep those people engaged with that destination in a helpful way.

Travel Inspiration – while people may not be traveling now, they are certainly going to get tired of being quarantined and will start researching for inspiration. We are already see it happening on sites like Travel + Leisure, Matador, and more... slide shows can bring the area to life. Spring is springing, use imagery to tell a story without a hard (or any) travel sell. Use your destination to brighten someone’s day by sharing the beauty with them.

Natural social distancing: exploring outdoor location where there is plenty of room to keep your distance. Some things we are seeing – hiking, golf, tennis.

Drivetime – the earliest travelers are going to be those exploring their drivetime destinations.

Long lead – summer, fall and even winter. Work with your partners to identify packages for re-emerging as people start to move around again.

We know this is having a major impact on everyone in the tourism industry and that we all are facing some hard times and difficult decisions. We are in this together and look forward to getting through this with each and every one of you and preparing to emerge strong back into the tourism world. **In the meantime, stay healthy! You live and work in an amazing destination! Walk on the beach, take a hike, do yoga – do something to work off the stress and clear your head.**

Sincerely,

Deborah Stone  
Pineapple Public Relations

