



**Myrtle Beach Area Convention and Visitors Bureau
CVB Group Sales Committee Meeting Minutes
August 2, 2016**

Attendees: David Amend, Charlie Bradshaw, Ellen Calhoun, Kelly Cauble, Jessica Cutler, Sabena Dayton, Alexia Edge, Robin Harvey, Heather Horner, Tim Huber, Pauline Levesque, Anna Lillemoen, Molly Mercer, Stephanie Parsons, Pam Reis, Sharon Salyer, Heidi Vukov

Guest: Matt Kemp

Staff: Mike Anderson, Kim DaRoja, Casey Dornhecker, Melanie Doty, Ursula Grant, Sandy Haines, Keith Pierce, Bill Rosenthal (Visibility and Conversions), Lisa Saguto (Intern), Michelle Schollmeyer, Mikki Walls, Josh Williams (Visibility and Conversions)

1. **Call to Order/Introductions:** Charlie Bradshaw
2. **Approval of Minutes:** Pauline Levesque made a motion to approve the minutes from the June 7, 2016 meeting. Robin Harvey seconded and motion was carried.
3. **Marketing Update:** Josh Williams with Visibility and Conversions reviewed the January 1– July 27, 2016, Group & Meetings Website Activity Year-Over-Year Report. Numbers are up year-over-year in aggregate. From 2015 to 2016, we are seeing about a 5% increase overall. There was concern about why certain pages were receiving less traffic than others and it's really a product of where we are sending most of our advertising traffic. The strategy this year is to drive traffic to the more specific pages; meetings, groups, sports. Overall, traffic is up across the board. RFP numbers have increased by 60%. When the website redesign was rolled out, the "guide by mail request" was repositioned further down on the page, with the digital version preceding, and therefore, more prominent. Also, groups of 15 or more are encouraged to fill out an RFP.
4. **Trade show/ Sales Mission Review:**
 - a. **International Pow-Wow (IPW):** Kim DaRoja along with Kimberly Hartley, Canada/International Sales Manager attended June 18-22, 2016, in New Orleans, LA. Also, in attendance were Brad Dean, President and CEO and Scott Schult, EVP of Marketing for the MBACC/CVB and Sabena Dayton, representing Kingston Resorts. We once again, shared exhibit space with SCPRT, which also included Charleston and Hilton Head, SC. We had a total of 39 appointments with several being already established buyers and strong potential for several others. We typically do not receive group leads from this show because this is individual, leisure domestic and international. Brad Dean was recently reappointed by the U.S. Secretary of Congress for a second term on the Tourism & Travel Advisory Board for U.S. Travel.

- b. **Meeting Professionals International World Education Conference (MPI-WEC):** Mikki Walls attended June 11-14, 2016 in Atlantic City, NJ. There were education sessions, networking and business opportunities for the meeting and event community. MPI has 18,000 members and about 70 chapters, with this being their big annual event. We bought into a level three sponsorship which gave us hosted-buyer appointments, including 10 additional appointments on that Saturday. We secured about 15 appointments and about 15 planners stopped by our table.

MPI-WEC was not approved for 2017. Pursue other regional MPI meetings and opportunities.

- c. **MPI Carolina Chapter Meeting (MPI-CC):** Mikki Walls attended July 13-15, 2016 in Chapel Hill, NC. This was their July quarterly event. Also, conducted sales calls in Raleigh, NC with Bobbie Stanley from Brittain Resorts & Hotels and met with 6 clients; 5 of which currently have leads on the books.
 - d. **Travel Alliance Partnership (TAP):** Sandy Haines attended June 5-9, 2016, in Duluth, MN. This conference is by invitation only. Eight suppliers attended: Alabama Theatre, Beach Cove Resort, Brittain Resorts & Hotels, The Carolina Opry, Hampton Inn & Suites Oceanfront, Oceana Resorts, Original Benjamin's Calabash Seafood, and The Palace Theatre Myrtle Beach. Appointments are 20 minutes each and they met with all 29 Tour Operators in attendance. Sixteen out of the 29 tour operators are already booking Myrtle Beach. This group of tour operators buy into each other's tours. This was a very good show.
 - e. **IBTM – America:** Ursula Grant attended June 15-17, 2016, in Nashville, TN. This is a 3 day hosted buyer event. IBTM was formerly AIBTM. There were a total 30 appointments, and 2 RFPs and a few potentials for MAMFAM. This has been a good a show. Ursula Witherspoon, with the Myrtle Beach Convention Center also attended. Additionally, a total of 7 outside sales calls were conducted.
- IBTM – America was approved to attend in 2017.
- f. **SC Society of Association Executives (SCSAE) Annual Conference:** Ursula Grant attended June 5-7, 2016 in Charlotte, NC. This is more of an annual get together with education sessions, and is not a tradeshow.

5. Pending Tradeshow:

- a. **Your Military Reunion Connection (YMRC):** Melanie Doty reviewed the YMRC tradeshow held February 7-12, 2016, in Myrtle Beach at the Landmark Resort. At the March 2, 2016, meeting, there was a discussion to research attending a YMRC tradeshow in another destination to represent the Myrtle Beach area. Melanie Doty reported that there is an East Coast show in Savannah, GA scheduled for November 6-9, 2017.

YMRC Savannah was approved to attend in 2017.

- b. Independent Planner Educational Conference (IPEC):** Mikki Walls reviewed this tradeshow that was tabled for voting from the April 5, 2016, committee meeting until the 2017, location was announced. This show is made up of independent planners. This is a growing segment of planners who are not with an organization like HelmsBriscoe or ConferenceDirect. 60 planners attended the hosted-buyer show, and we secured 18 appointments. So far, one lead has been generated.

IPEC was not approved to attend in 2017. Revisit when it is held on East Coast.

- c. Meeting & Incentive Forums:** Mikki Walls reviewed this tradeshow that was tabled for voting from the June 7, 2016, committee meeting to determine RFPs and ROI. Mikki attended May 21-24, 2016, in Scottsdale, AZ. Marina Inn at Grande Dunes was the partner who also attended. This is a four-day intensive hosted/buyer event in which we opted to only participate the first two days, which focuses on domestic based groups. We secured 25 pre-scheduled appointments. We have received four leads with one going to contract. The tradeshow will be held April 23-26, 2017, in Cancun, Mexico.

Meeting & Incentive Forums was approved to attend in 2017. Offer a lottery system to allow other members to attend along with MB CVB.

6. Update:

- a. Sports Update:** Mike Anderson provided a sports update since June committee meeting. We are looking at how we can get involved with the State Games of America Winter Games 2018. The promoter is in Greenville, SC. The NCAA process is consuming a majority of his time. We narrowed it down from 90 championships to 39 potentials for the Myrtle Beach area to 3 sports. Those sports are golf, lacrosse, and wrestling. We are looking at multiple venues in our market. We are submitting 35 bids for 2018-2022 and we must submit a bid for each individual year and sport. Decisions should be made by the end of the year. Our goal is to have one championship a year.
- b. YTD Goal Report:** Kim DaRoja reported on the 2016 group sales goals report as of July 31, 2016.
 - i. Total number of leads generated is 653 with total potential room nights of 273,319. Currently at 64% of the 1,025 lead goal for 2016. Fifteen leads were generated year to date for Myrtle Beach Sports Center.
 - ii. Total number of room nights booked is 187,205. Currently at 81% of the 230,606 room night goal. 18 booked leads for the Myrtle Beach Sports Center. The number of assist leads is 202.
- c. YTD Prospects:** Kim DaRoja reviewed the prospect report. We are working on a report that will show prospects and conversion status. We have several efforts that we are utilizing for prospects. This report only shows the prospects that have resulted in an actual lead. Year-to-date, 34 leads with 22 assists/definite bookings, with 7 still in lead status and 5 lost business.

- d. **YTD Site Visit:** Kim DaRoja reviewed Site Visit & Fam Report. Melanie Doty has year-to-date 9 leads with a 33% conversion rate to definite lead status. Mikki Walls had a couple of sites that have resulted in more than one lead; year-to-date 10 leads with a 50% conversion rate. Ursula Grant had year-to-date 15 leads with a 43% conversion rate. Sandy Haines has had year-to-date, 6 bookings with a 67% conversion rate. So, overall we have had 35 site visits, 16 definite bookings year-to-date, with an overall conversion rate year-to-date of 46%. Our conversion rate goal is to be above 60% and last year we ended the year with 82%. With site visits, typically a lead goes out first and once we are in the top 3 choices, then a site visit is conducted. With FAMs, typically you bring the client in first, before leads are actually generated.

- e. **International Update:** Kim DaRoja reviewed the updates provided by Kimberly Hartley, Canadian/International Sales Manager. We launched an extended “CAN AM Days Deals” promotion to our fellow Canadian consumers which offered savings of up to 50 percent from January 1, 2016 to April 30, 2016. This savings promotion was welcomed by the travel trade, the consumer and the media in Canada with open arms. Many of our members embraced the program and stepped up to the plate to encourage Canadians to visit the Myrtle Beach area. We avoided a dramatic decline in Canadian visitors due to this savings promotion.

Plans to launch “60 More Days of Summer campaign” for the fall of 2016 offering Canadians (and Americans) local savings. This will be promoted to our Canadian media for press coverage.

The travel visitation volume forecast for Canada to the U.S. has been revised to reflect a 1% growth for 2016, with signs of showing improvement over 2015. Porter Airlines completed their 2016, seasonal service and Porter Escapes reported it was a good season for the airline. WestJet Airlines is currently operating seasonal service with an increase to three flights per week during the summer; returning to two flights per week during the fall, with service ending October 23, 2016.

Drive traffic to the USA has declined (along with air traffic) over the last year, as highlighted previously, however, CAA (Canadian Automobile Association) has reported a slow but steady interest for Trip Tiks to South Carolina year to date from their members who traditionally make driving trips along the eastern seaboard. Myrtle Beach, Charleston and Hilton Head, SC rank in the top destinations. Kimberly Hartley is currently finalizing the list of our members who offer CAA rates, to send to the CAA travel and member services offices across Canada. The deadline for submission: August 26, 2016.

7. **Unfinished Business:**

Kim DaRoja wanted to reiterate that whether it is a tradeshow partnership that you are going with us on, or you are attending on your own, we would welcome any feedback as the better the feedback

we have from members the better information and more accurate we can provide. If you partnered with us, we would like to be included if the client didn't reach out to us, but contacted the hotel property directly. This would help us with accurately reflecting ROI and reporting.

The next meeting is at 2:30 p.m. on Tuesday, October 4, 2016, in the Chamber boardroom.