

ETC 2015

TRAVEL PLANNER FORUM NOTES

DOWN & DIRTY OF DOMESTIC TRAVEL NOTES

ATTENDEES

- 1ST guy who talked – 40 tours, 4-5 of which are domestic but they struggle with domestic
- Katherine from Cal Berkeley
- Nancy Mitchell from Whitman College in Walla Walla: 1-2 are domestic
- Rhonda with AZ State – 40 tours, 2 domestic. Domestic are most popular
- Usha with Tufts – 25 tours, just strting to do domestic
- Aylin with Grounds for Sculpture in New Jersey – only done domestic so far and that's what her travelers want based on surveys
- Jeanne with Springfield Museum of Fine Arts – 16-18 tours. Mainly day trips, 2 overnight, 2 overseas
- Kate with University of Chicago – 2 domestic tours and that would include Canada, so 2 in N America
- Mark with Concordia – 1 domestic trip over the past 10 years
- Anita with Colorado College – building travel program from scratch, 6-12 per year, 1/3 are domestic
- Marguerite Jones with Johns Hopkins – 30 per year
- Roberta with Philadelphia Zoo
- Ben Sander with National Parks
- Lisa with the Santa Barbara Museum of Art

PERCENTAGE OF TOURS THAT ARE DOMESTIC

- Went around the room and asked percentage of tours are domestic. They ranged from none to all, with the majority of attendees saying that around 10% of tours are domestic.

WHO TRAVELS DOMESTICALLY

- sometimes older people who don't want to go on long flights
- people who want to see a domestic destination in a different way
- sometimes they can tap into people who would not go on international trips
- Domestic is cheaper, feels safer when things are going on in the Middle East
- One person finds people still want to go to Europe

GROUP SIZE

- Ben's National Parks trips max 16 people. His travelers really like how small it is. Guide to traveler ratio is also important. They want intimate

FAMILY TOURS

- Some people do. Others find challenging.

WORKING WITH A TOUR OPERATOR:

- Philadelphia Zoo has worked with Vantage and another agent she found who is in Conde Nast
- Katherine works with Orbridge but is looking for another operator. They want to do more of a customized tour instead of signing onto a tour that is already created, might feel canned. Also wants to offer lower price point than what Orbridge charges.
- Tufts used Gohagan for Alaska

- Some people in the room want to use tour operators but don't currently. So much work.
- Ben 350,000 list. One man shop. Has to use operators because he is a one man shop. Off the Beaten Path, Pacific Islands Institute, or Black Sheep Adventures (Death Valley/Arcadia.) They are the experts. Program has grown from 90 people to 250, growing robustly. Trips are around \$3,000-3,500
- WWF works with Natural Habitat
- National Geographic always with Lindblad

PLANNING IN-HOUSE

- no language barrier, so easier to do without a tour operator than international.
- still, there are challenges. For one, it's a lot of work.
- risk of doing in-house of course, but financial reward can be worth it. Domestic tours always seem to end up making more \$ than I think they will.
- Hotel contracts - some don't make you put a deposit. Get deposit from travelers and it's non refundable so that takes out the risk. Sometimes you need to sort of string them along in order to get them to be patient about you signing a contract until you have deposits from travelers in hand.
- Finding a bus company can be a challenge. Roberta from Philadelphia said start with the American Bus Association.

HOW TO MAKE IT SPECIAL

- Faculty goes along
- Inside access. The museum might arrange tours to visit exhibitions of ours that are traveling, or where we have a piece of art on loan, or, because we are launching a renovation, our board members and curators traveled to see other museums that had been renovated.

Travel can encourage a deep relationship between the traveler and the institution. International trips are usually longer and there can be a level of bonding that occurs from being in a far-off place that I

don't feel always happens with domestic tours. How can domestic tours be used to strengthen the traveler's bond with the institution?

WAYS DOMESTIC TOURS CAN BE AN ASSET TO YOUR INSTITUTION/HIGHLIGHT YOUR INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHS

- Ben says working with operator allows him to get his message out
- Domestic can be more affordable to send staff rep/study leader on tour to create bond to the organization

CHALLENGES WITH DOMESTIC TRAVEL

- people can travel there on their own. Challenge is how to make it special so that they want to sign up for a tour. Behind the scenes access, complicated arrangements they wouldn't want to deal with on their own, access to guides/study leaders, worry free travel so they can fully enjoy/absorb the tour.

MARKETING

- Webinars. Ben uses Gotowebinar or Adobe Connect. During webinars, there are pop up surveys. This allows you to tailor trip based on interests. Follow up.
- Challenge - making tours more diverse. Marketing to a more diverse crowd.
- Katherine from Cal - 40% of National Parks trips - grandparents taking their grandkids, sparks on idea, pull at their heartstrings. Ben struggles with family tours. Katherine has used Orbridge and they're inexpensive enough. Put third kid in room. Not something like Alaska cruises though – they will go with Princess. Pictures sell it. Do older travelers get annoyed with kids there who are not traveling with family? Katherine says no, they are happy to have kids along.
- Ben recommends getting images from Dreamstime or Istock Photo
- TIPS
Dreams time or Istock photo – iconic photos for affordable rates
- Pair up with other organizations. Maybe another organization can help you get access to someone. Partnering amongst yourself. Philadelphia Zoo has partnered with non-like organizations. SB Bank and Yale.
- Rhonda has had a more negative experience with co-sponsoring – Cuba through Gohagan. Could have filled it but co-sponsors filled it first. Same with Ireland. 3 spaces only, no host, no commissions.

FUNDRAISING OR FRIEND-RAISING

- Nancy at Whitman does not need to make a profit.
- Katherine at CAL has 1100 travelers. 250K profit after expenses.

WHAT DESTINATIONS ARE HOT:

- Marguerite with John Hopkins: New Orleans, Santa Fe. Napa – was popular. Alum was friend with Mondavi.
- Walla: down coast. Academic program focused on past travelers and creating a bond to University via meeting of travelers in Bluff, UT. Adventure travel.
- Katherine: One-week New York and Ashland
- Aylin with Grand Sculpture: Key West. Wellness in Palm Springs and Laguna Beach but didn't sell
- Lisa with the Santa Barbara Museum of Art: New Orleans, Santa Fe, Philadelphia (flower show), Charleston
- Rhonda: Yoga trip to Costa Rica

From: Benjamin Sander [<mailto:bsander@npca.org>]
Sent: Thursday, February 26, 2015 2:17 PM
To: Abigail Jansen Busdeker; 'Hill, Lisa'
Cc: 'JMara DelliPriscoli'
Subject: RE: NOTES: ETC Travel Planner Forum - Domestic Travel

I think my biggest WOW moment was learning how few domestic tours may of the planners do even though there are many options right here in the U.S. that may provide unique and more affordable options for their travelers.

**Of course I am bias because all my trips are domestic and national parks are so great!

Ben Sander
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2015 EDUCATIONAL TRAVEL CONFERENCE

TRAVEL PLANNER FORUM LUNCHEON DISCUSSIONS: BEST PRACTICES III

Wednesday, February 18, 2015

Elizabeth DeGaetano, Associate Director, American Museum of Natural History Expeditions

What's Hot, What's Not: Colleagues From Like Institutions Share Questions, Trends and Issues
(Natural History, Aquarium, Conservation, Zoo)

Attendees: Massachusetts Audubon, Shed Aquarium, Philadelphia Zoo, Oglebay Zoo, AMNH Expeditions

Common Trends and Issues:

1. Shrinking program size, some by half
2. Trend to transition to donor development focus
3. Difficulty in attracting new travelers
4. Working directly with local operators is financially attractive but liability issues are a major concern
5. Justifying the travel program to risk averse senior management even when the program is financially viable