

CVBs Reveal Best Ideas During DMA West

BY HOLLY WOOLARD ON SEPTEMBER 29, 2015



One of the most stimulating sessions during the annual Destination Marketing Association of the West (DMA West) event is the Best Ideas Program. Each year the organization solicits submissions from convention and visitor bureaus from throughout the West to showcase innovative projects and creative marketing strategies by its members.

This year's DMA West Destination Marketing Summit took place Sept. 23-25, in Ogden, Utah. The winning ideas from 2014-15 came from Flagstaff, Arizona; Lane County, Oregon; Marina del Rey, California; and Visit Salt Lake, Utah.

What's cool about the best ideas recognition is that destination management organizations are rewarded for effective campaigns and get to share their triumphs with peers. *Smart Meetings* was particularly impressed with the idea coming out of Marina del Rey, which relied on social media and a partnership with Delray Beach, Florida, to get the word out about all there is to do in both destinations. The DMOs used stuffed animals to tell their stories, capturing the mini mascots doing everything from visiting attractions to moving through their respective airports.

Congratulations to the winners and keep those best ideas coming!

Marina del Rey, California, Convention & Visitors Bureau

Project Title: Beach Buddies: “Beach Buddies” is a collaboration that was launched in 2014 by the Marina del Rey CVB and the Delray Beach Marketing Cooperative. The purpose of the West Coast/East Coast partnership is simple: showcase activities, attractions, dining and hotels in each destination while highlighting parallels between the two. Factors such as the shared “del rey” name, similar coastal chic vibes, and close proximity to major international airports helped to inspire “Beach Buddies;” however, one of the driving forces behind the concept was that both DMOs have limited budgets (less than \$1 million) and a small staff (4-5 employees). Both DMOs were looking at ways to raise awareness of their respective destinations without overspending marketing dollars and knew that “Beach Buddies” would be a creative and effective way to share the offerings of both communities. It’s been a true grassroots effort from both teams, using social media platforms as the main foundation of the collaboration. “Beach Buddies” is seen through Instagram posts, blogs, custom hashtags and Facebook updates. The DMOs also introduced their respective mascots – Marty the Pelican (Marina del Rey) and Swinton the Turtle (Delray Beach) – as the “Beach Buddies.” The DMOs created Facebook albums and Instagram hashtags that follow the mascots’ adventures throughout both towns, highlighting area dining, hotels, activities and events through frequent postings. Social media followers learn about each destination as Marty the Pelican gives a “bird’s eye view” of Delray Beach and Swinton the Turtle “comes out of his shell” in Marina del Rey. www.visitmarinadelrey.com

Flagstaff, Arizona, Convention & Visitors Bureau

Project Title: Flagstaff #VisitCool and Flagstaff Cool Zone: This past July, Flagstaff Convention & Visitors Bureau launched a yearlong promotion in its top inbound market highlighting the temperature difference between the cool mountains of Flagstaff and the heat of the Phoenix metro area. Flagstaff placed nearly 17 tons of ice throughout the valley and engaged event-goers through brand ambassadors and contest entries. Encased in each ice feature were symbols of Flagstaff, including bikes, trekking poles, snowboards, telescopes and axes. Ambassadors used talking points to highlight the cool mountains of northern Arizona and engage visitors to sign up for nearly \$2,500 of prizes, including a four-day getaway to Flagstaff and the actual bikes that were encased in ice. To continue the reach of the campaign, the Flagstaff CVB installed the Flagstaff Cool Zone in the heart of the Legends Entertainment District between the Arizona Diamondbacks stadium and Phoenix Suns arena. The Cool Zone features more than 1,200 square feet of Flagstaff imagery at street level, with a live temperature display and cooling misters. Throughout the year the CVB will ‘activate’

different spaces in the Legends District to highlight the seasonality of Flagstaff. The first of these was August 7, 2015, and once again featured trekking poles encased in ice. The entire program is supported with online video pre-roll and social ads, a temperature-based mobile display campaign and #VisitCool social engagement. The Flagstaff CVB has 11 partners involved in the program, which expands the reach of the campaign through their efforts as well. www.flagstaffarizona.org

Travel Lane County, Oregon

Project Title: Mobile Information Kiosk Explorer, MIKE the Bike: MIKE the Bike is a visitor center bike that engages and inspires. An extension of Travel Lane County's easily accessible adventure brand, it increases both destination and organizational awareness among visitors, locals and industry stakeholders. The goal for the first year of MIKE the Bike was to design, build and implement a visitor services experience that allowed Travel Lane County to bring its brand and service to an active audience that was not using its brick and mortar locations. The bike also needed to convey the Travel Lane County brand while on the road. Versatile in design, the bike can be branded with either the DMO or sports commission logo. Introducing a new audience to the value of visitor services elevates the role of the DMO with a younger, active tech-savvy audience that values a personalized recommendation and yet doesn't frequent traditional visitor centers. Locally made and human powered, MIKE the Bike demonstrates an authentic implementation of green and sustainable practices while promoting sustainable use of the local natural resources by visitors. Relying on well-trained staff to customize the destination message to the individual's needs and interests reduces the number and variety of handouts that need to be produced. MIKE the Bike is a strong ambassador for both the destination and the DMO. www.eugenecascadescoast.org

Visit Salt Lake, Utah

Project Title: Mobile Attraction Pass: Visit Salt Lake partnered with a local company, Bandwango, to develop a SaaS model for software allowing destination marketing organizations like Visit Salt Lake to create, manage and sell mobile-friendly visitor passes designed to target any visitor segment. Visit Salt Lake currently uses this software for its Connect Pass product—a single pass valid at 13 attractions that the DMO has been selling for a number of years as a card-based system. Visit Salt Lake officially launched this product in May 2015. Since moving to a mobile-friendly platform, customers can now purchase directly from their mobile phone, receive a digital pass via text and email, and share and redeem their attraction tickets directly from their phone. Additionally, all of the local attraction partners and Visit Salt Lake members now have the ability to send visitors real-time spending incentives through this platform. Other features of this platform include private sale checkout sites for special groups, generation of promo codes for marketing and advertising

purposes, pixel tracking to measure effectiveness of ad campaign through purchase, and affiliate marketing tools to facilitate distribution by third parties. Non-attractions can also sell through this platform, including restaurants, bars, retail stores, transportation companies and coupon books. This is not a native app. It is a web application that works across all online platforms and redemption can also occur via print-at-home vouchers for non-mobile visitors or international travelers. Visit Salt Lake plans on creating additional multi-attraction products, selling all of the attractions and others as individual products, and combining small groups of attractions based on the wants and needs of groups and meeting planners for their citywide conventions. This allows ultimate flexibility and can all be booked online as well as from the registration site of an incoming convention. Visit Salt Lake staff envisions using this online technology to sell light-rail transportation from the airport to downtown to convention groups. All of these purchases can be managed and redeemed from one's smart phone. Learn more at www.visitsaltlake.com/things-to-do/connect-pass/.