



Put Some Wind In Your Sales

An eBook by Digital Edge

<http://digitaledge.marketing>

10161 Centurion Parkway N
Suite 170 Jacksonville, FL 32256

info@digitaledge.marketing
904.619.2714

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Nina House, Sales Manager on the Client eCommunications program she used for the first time for SGMP:

I was talking to one person at my table and when I looked up I had a line of about 10 - 12 people. Just waiting. People had questions about all of the new things going on in Atlanta. Plus, I had a couple of planners sign up for the promotion. I had a steady flow of people at my trade show table. I ran out of everything. So, yes it worked.

Lauren Dismuke Rushing

Director, Group Markets

Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau

A Word From an Edgy Sales Veteran

Selling.



Shirley Smith
Co-Founder, Digital Edge

A handwritten signature of Shirley Smith in a cursive script, written in a light purple color.

It can be a high bar to hurdle. If you're selling an entire destination to event planners and other decision makers, then go ahead and add a few hurdles ... then elevate those suckers up to Olympic regulation-height. DMO's pain points and struggles, I understand them. I've lived them.

Before co-founding Digital Edge, I served as Director of Sales & Marketing with Marriott Hotels and Resorts, then as Vice President of Sales at Visit Jacksonville. After that, I lead the sales team at One Ocean Resort and Spa in Atlantic Beach, FL. My career has been focused heavily on sales and meetings marketing. I can tell you from experience that DMOs and their sales teams need custom, creative ways to increase destination awareness and reach meeting and event professionals.

I invite you to take a look at this quick read and share it with your colleagues. Make a goal to put these objectives into action and hopefully, it will help you put some wind in your sales.

Enjoy!



Put some wind in your sales.

No matter where you are in your journey.

You could be a natural-born salesperson—

able to sell cut-rate drum lessons to Neil Peart himself

—and it wouldn't matter; even the best salespeople and teams can learn something. In meetings & conventions sales, this is especially true.

Throughout destination marketing organizations, the meetings & conventions industry gets painted with a wide brush sometimes. Don't forget that just like any market, this sector has its niches. So, how you market and sell to the planners (and the other powers that be) of these distinctive niches should vary.

FOUR

Objectives to Keep in Mind

Creating awareness for your meetings and event product is more critical now than ever. With digital marketing allowing destinations to gain more reach with fewer dollars, the competition strengthens among destinations for meetings and convention business.

Destinations are now developing creative promotional ideas and campaigns for targeting meetings business. To launch a successful meetings campaign, four objectives should be top of mind:



**Building Your
Meetings Database**



**Generating
Leads**



**Getting Planners In
For Site Inspections**



**Closing Business...
Then Closing More**

ONE Building Your Meetings Database

Building your meetings database can be the single most important objective for running a meetings marketing campaign. Without a strong meeting planner database, your marketing message will have limited reach within one of the most influential marketing channels available, email.

Email Marketing Statistics*



47% Of Marketers Report That Email Generates The Most ROI For Their Organization



58% Plan to Increase Spending On Email During the Next Year



Nearly 40% Wish They Could Do More Targeted, Personalized Email Marketing

*Statistics Source: Emma (2017) Email Marketing Industry Report: What's Driving Today's Marketers?

Too often, valuable planner contact information goes by the wayside once sales teams return from trade shows. They are too busy to enter all the information into their database as they prepare for the next show, client event, FAM or other sales activity. Sad but true, we all have failed at this one time or another, and the planner database remains weak at best.

2 TWO Generating Leads

Now, how exciting is it to get leads?

They are the first steps to bringing a meeting or convention to your destination. A lead obtained by the planner is the next best thing to an actual RFP. They are showing interest in your destination and may have an actual program that would work. By launching a meetings marketing campaign, you will have the opportunity to capture valuable leads.

Don't get us wrong, we know an RFP is so much better and a lot less work but this is where you can get in the forefront of RFP's going out to your hotel partners by NSO's, third parties, etc. By a planner giving you their contact information and letting you know they do have meetings business to be had, you can then connect and qualify the business. If your destination is a good fit, then obtain the RFP yourself; that's really what you were meant to do, right?

As a DMO, you are an organization that needs to market to planners and ensure a return on our investment by generating leads for new meetings business.

You Are Not in a Role To Be Another Third Party Company and Just Distribute RFPs

that your hotel partners are already getting from other sources. Otherwise, what true value are you, other than the services you provide at that point?

3 THREE

Getting Planners In For Site Inspections

As industry veterans, we know that once you can get a planner in for a site inspection, you have an increased chance of closing the business.

With this being one of your key objectives for running a meetings marketing campaign, you need to

make sure you are customizing your marketing messages

based on your targeted market segments and meeting types.

All business is different, and just like your marketing messages, you should customize site inspections for the needs and requirements of the meeting program.

Know the planner's meeting/convention program by qualifying and researching how your destination can be the right fit.

Just as important as understanding the market segment being corporate, association or government, it is also beneficial to know the type of meeting being held and the type of individuals that will be in attendance. This is crucial to creating the right site visit itinerary.



EXAMPLE

Market Segment: Corporate
Meeting Type: Sales-Incentive vs. Training
Attendee Type: Executives vs. New Hires

SCENARIO:

Say you get a lead for two corporate groups of the same size (“Corporate Group A” and “Corporate Group B”). Although they both are corporate, you automatically think they have larger budgets available than say an association group. The type of meeting and the type of attendees can be a major qualifier for how your hotel partners will respond to the lead and what preparation will be needed for the meeting planner when they come in for a site inspection.

A

CORPORATE GROUP A

is a sales and incentive program that will have sales executives and management in attendance will likely be more interested in upscale hotel properties, unique off-site venues, ground transportation options and possible DMC connections. Of course, they will also have a significant budget to incentivize the sales executives.

B

CORPORATE GROUP B

is a training program that will have new hires in attendance and will likely be looking for midscale type hotel properties, ample meeting space with a secure internet connection and adequate on-site food and beverage options as well as opportunities within walking distance. Now the budget will be minimal as the only objective will be to get the new hires trained. Your hotel partners may not be so quick to respond, and the meeting planner’s needs and requirements will be significantly different.

With that said, one size doesn’t fit all. If you don’t do your homework and bring in “Corporate Group B” meeting planner for a site inspection, then discuss and showcase “Corporate Group A” options, you will probably have wasted your and their time—inevitably losing the business to another destination.

We know this may sound like Sales 101, but unfortunately, it happens more often than not in the DMO world.

4 FOUR Closing Business... Then Closing More

Say you've customized your message, campaign and site inspections for interested planners; why would you stop now? Personalize the way you close your business with creative initiatives like email marketing automation, relevant industry blogs, social connection and tailored sales messaging. A few smart marketing efforts can help you close more sales.



Use Email Marketing Automation

With email marketing automation, planners receive more than a blanketed email. Instead, they get a series of hyper-relevant and personalized messages about the destination (and about things that pique their specific interests). These emails are crafted according to user interaction. So, think of this process as an "If that, then this" scenario. If a planner opens the first email in the series, they will get a specific email the next time; if they do not open the first one, they will get a different email the next time around.

Email marketing automation can create a streamlined way for your sales team to communicate to their leads and has been shown to increase campaign performance and engage planners better than with a generic email. You can integrate this program with your web forms, email interactions and campaign conversions.

Use Blogs as Built-In Selling Tools

Not every question is answered (or every curiosity satisfied) on a site visit alone. Blogs that are specific to your meetings & conventions sector can provide planners with additional information, and answer any retrospective questions that arise. Think of these as built-in website tools to help you sell. Typically, meetings blogs read a little more conversational than your other web pages and can help illustrate destination nuances and provide material for future attendees to read.





Connect Socially With Planners

According to a 2017 EventTrack study*, 61% of event planners use social media to market their events and use it as a promotional tool afterward. Since they're already using platforms like LinkedIn and Facebook for business, why not connect with them on these platforms after a site visit? It's a great way to manage your relationships and close more business. In fact, DMAI reported in 2016 that sales efforts that encompass social media marketing have a 75% higher close rate.

Customizing Sales Messages Via Marketing

Marketing brings your sales message to life. Look to create campaigns that speak to the market niches and the different types of planners. For example, think about creating (or getting a [skillful digital agency](#) to build) a customer-focused landing page to target your leads. You can create individual ones for associations, medical planners, military planners, etc. Landing pages are a creative way to showcase your sales messages and can provide highlights about the destination, potentially converting leads into sales.



*Source: [Certain](#) (2016) 75 Stellar Event Marketing Statistics to Help You Measure Event Success

So What Are You Waiting For?



Gerald

Resident Badass, Digital Edge

Put some wind in your sales and begin developing creative meetings campaigns that will set your team in the right direction for booking new meetings business for your destination and showing the true value of your sales efforts.



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