



MEETING NOTES: Wednesday, July 10, 2013 • 3:30-5:00 pm • Greater Williamsburg Chamber, Williamsburg, VA

Group Members Present

Booking Engine Co-Chairs: Julie O'Neil, Kristi Olsen

Director, Destination Marketing: Corrina Ferguson

Group Members: Joan Heikens, Jean Ray Lucca, Cathy Waltrip

Other Staff: Dave Potter

Group Members Absent Su Tutone

1. Julie called the meeting to order at 3:35

2. Welcome and Introductions

Corrina passed out copies of the contact list and requested everyone double check their information. No changes were noted. Julie welcomed everyone and asked that group members introduce themselves and highlight their backgrounds.

3. Review Advisory Group Conduct & Guidelines

Corrina provided copies of the Advisory Group Conduct & Guidelines to everyone. She briefly reviewed the sheet and commented that as we work towards developing this new system of Advisory Groups and relationship building among all partners, it is critical that all AG members adhere to a basic outline of guidelines. These have been shared with every Advisory Group. She pointed out that in order for the group to successfully meet the Charter goal of promoting the Historic Triangle as an overnight destination, everyone needs to remember to focus collaboratively on that goal, not on their individual business needs or goals.

4. Review Advisory Group Charter

Corrina provided copies of the Booking Engine Advisory Group Charter. The charter was briefly highlighted. No questions were presented.

4. Training & Call Center Overview

Kristi reviewed the current process for training the ARES Call Center team. There are three trainings annually, two digital – one in March, one in late August or early September, and one in-person meeting in May. Kristi and Julie put together a slideshow presentation with information on attractions, seasonal events or new additions, new lodging properties, renovations etc. Note: putting together this presentation is very time intensive and the group needs as much help as possible gathering the info. Presentations are typically 45 minutes long with 15 minutes for Q & A.

5. Packaging and Booking Engine Overview

Julie mentioned that this group needs to coordinate with the Website group and the Marketing & Promotions group to make sure that the packages that are being served up are accurate and change seasonally as appropriate. It can be challenging to keep up to date on hotel closings, name changes, NPS free ticket days – all items that impact the packages and products for sale.

Jean asked how frequently do hotels refer potential visitors to this site with all of the packages available? She commented that many smaller properties in particular do not have the time or man power to facilitate packages individually, so may wish to use this site as a selling tool. Corrina informed the group that Joanna Skrabala is developing a series of training sessions for tourism businesses to learn more about the ability to update their listings on the VW.com site. The BE group could try to coordinate some additional information to share with lodging properties.

Group agreed that hotel training is critical, and see two types of training: 1. An ARES representative to inform on the functionality of the product and price negotiations for working with ARES, the GDS and more. 2. Basic use of VW.com and all of the packaging opportunities available. Encourage joint promotion of the site as a regional sales tool.

6. Discussion: Mobile-friendly booking engine software

- Corrina spoke with Mark from ARES re converting the booking engine to mobile compatible format. Points covered:
 - price is negotiable, but depends both on production (ours is good) and a mobile specific marketing plan to accompany the programming
 - Corrina noted a few concerns within the functionality of the software
 - Cannot go back to main DMO site from mobile booking engine
 - There is no “go to desktop version” available for full functionality
 - At the moment packages and deals do not work within the program *
 - In a follow up email, Mark indicated ARES has no immediate plans for addressing the lack of packages and deals functionality, therefore I do not recommend we spend our energy and budget on this upgrade just yet

7. Review of site feedback from new members

Group looked at a few pages of the reservations.visitwilliamsburg.com website. Members will review in more detail prior to the next meeting for an in-depth conversation. Items currently noted to address:

- The images on the “package list” page are stretched / need adjusting. Corrina will contact Mark to request correct pixel dimensions.
- Corrina noted that in some cases, the name(s) of the packages are not intuitive for those unfamiliar with the destination [i.e. Williamsburg Bounce]. Suggest consideration for names that can then be used in emails and other marketing efforts. Suggestion to be discussed at upcoming Advisory Group Chairs meeting.

8. Next meeting

Wednesday, August 14, 2013 • 3:00-4:30 Location: GWCTA

9. Meeting Adjourned at 4:55