



GREATER WILLIAMSBURG
CHAMBER & TOURISM ALLIANCE
DESTINATION CAMPAIGN MARKETING

Website Advisory Group

MEETING NOTES: Tuesday, June 18, 2013 • 2:00-3:30 pm • Jamestown Settlement, Jamestown, VA

Group Members Present

Website Chair: Susan Bak (via teleconference)

Director, Destination Marketing: Corrina Ferguson

Group Members: Renee Dallman, Skip Ferebee, Scott Hart, Robert Jeffrey, Michael Kokolis, Lindsey Mancari, Billy Scruggs, Bruce Wilson

Chamber Staff: Bob Harris, Joanna Skrabala

Other Contractors: Dave Potter, Aaron Bull

1. After a few minor technical difficulties, Corrina Ferguson called the meeting to order at 2:15

2. Welcome and Introductions

Corrina introduced herself the new Director of Destination Marketing for the Historic Triangle and Susan Bak as the group Chair. Group members stated their names and firms they represent.

3. Review Advisory Group Charter and Guidelines *(Susan joined us at this point in the agenda.)*

Corrina passed out copies of the new Advisory Group Charter and the new AG Conduct & Guideline outline. 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. VisitWilliamsburg.com historical overview

Susan gave a brief review of the development of VisitWilliamsburg.com from 2002-present. Highlighted points:

- Collaborative website developed on proprietary CMS by cooperative advertising partners (URL was GoWilliamsburg.com)
- After WADMC/MRTF formed, began managing website through ad agency, Momentum Worldwide; Search/Keyword campaign commenced with Harris LLC – January 2005
- Seasonal updates implemented, including homepage rotator feature, addition of seasonal/topical pages, such as Winter Fun, Indoor Activities, Spring Break, Summer, and Civil War, by Momentum – 2005-2009.
- Added electronic newsletters to website initiatives, content by subcommittee and layout and distribution managed by WADMC coordinator
- Significant changes made to Lodging section of website, created A-Z listing and added booking engine – January 2010
- Momentum teamed up with Ingenuity/Martin Agency to implement expanded Web-based advertising and search/keyword campaign – Fall 2010
- RFP for Website Content Manager to replace ad agency involvement and reduce costs while allowing for more flexibility for website updates - Spring/Summer 2011
- Conducted website usability study - Fall 2011
- Fall 2011 hired website writer to assist with updating general pages
- Moved website off ad agency Rack Space server to a separate Rack Space server – January 2012.
- Attractions, Entertainment, Evening Entertainment, Shopping, Arts sections reorganized based on consumer interest and best practices - Summer 2012
- Website management/hosting expenses for 2013 (\$58,200) were down 40% from 2010 level (\$96,943) and for 2012 visits were over a million, up 35% over previous year – 2013 Marketing Plan
- Migrated VisitWilliamsburg site, merging some of Explore Williamsburg content, to Wordpress CMS and WADMC Rack Space account; now only one destination website for WADMC and GWACTA – Winter 2013

5. Review of site feedback from new members

We asked each new member to spend some time reviewing the site and share any comments or feedback they have. Discussion ensued around the following points:

- Bob Jeffrey initiated the conversation by stating he believes the destination a. needs a new website (built from the ground up) b. requires lots of new visuals, in particular images that match the content of the pages and c. an individual (not a committee) needs to be ultimately responsible for the site.
- Bruce agreed wholeheartedly with Bob's comments and pointed out that Busch Gardens has gone through several generations of websites, while this destination still has the same one. In his opinion, it should be the goal of this new group to design and build the region a new website.
- Skip indicated agreement as well, adding that we need to determine what is required in order to have a site that matches consumer behavior for 2013 and beyond. He stressed the importance of using data to help determine what functionality is critical in a destination website. He also suggested we divide the work into two areas: a. short term fixes to long term problems and b. other items really not worth fixing due to budget and time.
- Bob Harris thanked the three long-term group volunteers for their feedback and reminded the group that budgetary restraints will affect any work on the site. For several years, the entire WADMC budget has been flat, leaving little room for new technology, etc.
- Bruce suggested considering taking a one-year media buying hit if that will help create a better product to help promote the region.
- Billy requested clarification on the stated large-scale goal, "to promote the Historic Triangle as an overnight destination".
- Skip shared with the group three more specific objectives that the Web Group developed to work on for the 2013 campaign:
 - Optimize VisitWilliamsburg.com to compel visitation to the destination
 - Increase online reservations
 - Communicate with consumers how they want it
- Corrina added that the large-scale goal is the ultimate goal for all of the advisory groups, combined. Each group will, as a team, develop their own more specific goals.
- Lindsey stated it was her first time reviewing the website, and suggested consideration that if one of our main goals is to increase reservations, then the booking widget should always be very visible and above the fold. She also stated that although there is a lot of good information on the site, it can be overwhelming.
- Renee pointed out that there are some inconsistencies throughout the design of the site: some pages have lists with photos that encourage "click to learn more"; other pages are much harder to look at and are very copy-heavy. She agreed with Lindsey's point that the site is overwhelming.
- Mike agrees that the booking engine widget should always be above the fold, and indicated he felt that even with a lot of information, the site was well organized. He did suggest that more variety in photography would help explain the destination at a glance, and perhaps help alter the perception that Williamsburg is "only history".
- Bob Harris agreed that photography on the site has been a challenge for a while, and that last year Bruce and Skip developed a wish list of images to help improve things. The wish list, however, has not been implemented.
- Scott focused his comments on the mobile version of the site. He pointed out it would be more visually appealing to see an image rather than the large menu as the very first impression. He also stated he feels it would make more sense to have "Welcome" come before "What's Happening". He questioned the current site functionality to allow for a consumer to buy tickets on their phone.
- Bob Harris indicated we have been in contact with ARES (the booking engine company) in regards to converting the reservations.visitwilliamsburg.com section of the site to be mobile friendly as well. That would then allow us to sell room nights in addition to tickets.
- Skip pointed out that ideally the site should be able to handle all types of m commerce, including dining reservations and more.

6. Discussion: Optimizing for Google search campaign

Corrina mentioned that we spend a good portion of our digital media budget on Google search campaigns, driving traffic to various pages within the website. While on average, the analytics indicate solid results, there is definitely room for improvement. As an example, the “What’s New” page was not functioning well as a landing page for AdWord campaigns and Corrina is working with Aaron and Lee Hall (copy writer) to improve the page. The group reviewed the current Fourth of July events page and discussed the feasibility of that page being a focus of a short and targeted campaign to take advantage of increases in seasonal search terms, i.e. “Fireworks in Virginia”.

- Skip suggested making our seasonal information pages be less overwhelming, by having the sole focus of the page be the stated content. Currently the Fourth of July page looks like all other pages on the site, and it can be overwhelming.
- Lindsey suggested adding a simple form to encourage email sign ups that has a strong call-to-action, such as “Want to learn more? Sign up for emails here!”
- Joanna noted this group needed to make sure to communicate with the "M&P" group about any changes, too, because seasonal pages and the What’s New page are frequently part of the e-newsletter content.

7. Next meetings

Proposed regular meeting schedule: Every other Thursday; 3:00-4:00 pm

Location: Alternating in-person, Call-in

June 27, 2013 ● Phone | July 11 ● Jamestown Settlement | July 25 ● Phone | August 8 ● GWCTA

8. Meeting Adjourned at 3:35