



**“The Opportunity Guy”
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the Power of
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Connections**

and more!

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“If the circus is coming to town and you paint a sign saying ‘Circus Coming to the Fairgrounds Saturday,’ that’s advertising. If you put the sign on the back of an elephant and walk him through town, that’s promotion. If the elephant walks through the mayor’s flowerbed, that’s publicity. If you can get the mayor to laugh about it, that’s public relations. And if you planned the elephant’s walk, that’s Marketing.”

— author unknown

WHAT’S UP ON THE WEB

Be careful where you click:

In a recent issue of “Travel Weekly,” Mark Pestronk, an attorney specializing in travel law, offers the Orbitz disclaimer as a good model. Orbitz, the newest airline website by the major airlines, has the formula down for the perfect disclaimer.

By registering at Orbitz.com and clicking through the series of prompts, you agree to their terms and conditions whether you choose to read them or not. Conditions include that you will be responsible for all uses of their Web site and your online password regardless of who uses it. Orbitz disclaims that the site will be error free, secure and disclaims the accuracy, completeness and the timeliness of information on its own site.

You can’t sue Orbitz for any of the above reasons even if Orbitz is found liable. Their total sum of liability will not exceed \$250. This could be extended to

liability on tickets, personal injury or death. Finally, any litigation must be in Illinois, Orbitz’s home state of incorporation and your click-through also disclaims you will ever participate in a class action suit.

Several colleagues and friends have been to the site and were amazed at the fares and deals. My advice to them, “be careful where you click!”

www.opportunityguy.com has been updated, and the Opportunity Guy has

NEW FROM THE WWW

enhanced his presence on the Web. The site includes a complete set of materials on the services and programs offered by Opportunities Unlimited and The Opportunity Guy. In addition, there are several downloadable articles and resources in The Opportunity Finder section for your reference. Drop in for a visit and e-mail a friend.



Looking at Leisure and the Power of Packaging



As the economic uncertainty continues, business profitability and cost cutting are taking a toll on the Travel Industry. CVBs, state tourism offices, travel suppliers and operators are looking at ways to bolster occupancy and increase business to offset the slide. Back burner business such as Associations, small meetings, SMERF groups and Leisure have all been moved to the forefront of tactical sales and marketing plans.

While several of these segments need to be seriously considered, many incorporate advance lead time and industry cycles to ensure success. However, leisure travelers are still on the move regardless of whether they are located in state, regional or national. They will provide tactical solutions for short-term business. These short-term leisure segments that provide opportunities to bounce back local, regional and past customers in an economic downturn tend to be those closest to home.

The paradigm of the American Vacation has shifted. Vacations are no longer a luxury or

option but rather a both a right and a necessity for most Americans. The increase in gasoline prices bore that out this summer. Most major tourism and hospitality industry associations noted concern with the bump in rates but felt that people would continue to travel and they did.

YPB, a well-known marketing firm that tracks travel trends, indicated that vacations are becoming shorter and more frequent. Their 2001 "Travel Monitor" also indicated that 54% of US households took at least one getaway vacation in 2000. This is categorized as a 2-, 3-, or 4-night trip over a weekend. Many getaway travelers are also looking at the opportunity to blend business travel and vacation travel when attending a meeting, conference or convention.

In order to capitalize on the leisure market segments, travel suppliers must consider "packaging," one of the industry's hottest trends. Customers are looking to simplify choices, save time, obtain value and emotionally get to their vacation as quickly as

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BUSINESS INFORMATION AND TOOLS TO NAVIGATE THE EVER-CHANGING MARKETPLACE

VOLUME 1, NO. 1



SEPTEMBER:

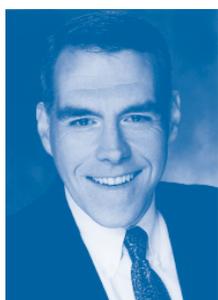
- Charlotte, NC
- Champaign, IL
- Portland, ME
- Hartford, CT

OCTOBER:

- Atlanta, GA
- Sacramento, CA
- Tulsa, OK
- Farmington, NM
- Vancouver, BC

NOVEMBER:

- Albany, NY
- Houston, TX
- Seattle, WA
- North Conway, NH
- Toronto, ON



Dear Colleagues and Friends:

Welcome to the first edition of *Passport to Opportunity* a newsletter designed to provide you with business content and tools to navigate the ever-changing market-

place. The Evita Syndrome has ended "and the money kept rolling in" and many organizations now recognize that a hot or new economy was not a substitute for sound business strategy or a marketing and sales plan.

The Passport concept was selected to provide readers' access to ideas, concepts and information

that are on the radar screen of the Opportunity Guy. Newsletter content includes the areas of Sales & Marketing, Customer Connections/Service and New Product Development. The business environment of ever-changing customer needs and sophistication creates a business imperative. Organizations must be open and ready to change perspective, direction and develop or reinvent new products and services constantly. Your thoughts and comments are welcome.

Enjoy,

Joe Veneto
The Opportunity Guy



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possible. Packages that provide these elements will have the most success with targeting consumers.

In addition, packages that provide value need to incorporate various levels of features such as accommodations, meals, activities, entertainment, special features and local flavor. They may include elements that clients may not be able to access or easily duplicate on their own, thus the value of packaging. The most compelling packages also focus on target consumer groups and or vacation activities. Examples might include packages for families, singles, women or multigenerational travelers. Vacation activities such as golf, NASCAR, history, arts or cultural attractions may provide the anchor for packaging.

For best results, framing packages or creating sizzle with one of 4Ts — a Theme, Thread, Trend or Tradition — might provide a compelling connection point for activities and features. One such example is the Gunflint Lodge in Minnesota. This deluxe lodge located three and a half hours north of Duluth has created specialty packages for women, birders, lovers and past guests. Gunflint realizes that people are motivated to travel based on affinities and activities.

The lodging segment of a package in many cases is used as the anchor to build the product and facilitate the operational components. However, any group of travel suppliers can begin the process to create and develop new package products for the marketplace to impact short-

and long-term business. As consumers' time becomes more valuable and tastes continue to change, client demand will drive the creation of new, compelling package products.

Once created, package distribution is key. Methods for package promotion may incorporate print mediums, Web sites, partner promotions, frequency programs and marketing organizations such as CVBs and state offices of tourism. One of the quickest methods to impact the package traveler is the Web, which is being used as a widespread tool for planning vacations and getaways. A recent Web study with a CVB market research firm found that the number one spot on its home page was the button for Packages. TIA's recent web travel report indicated that in addition to search engines and branded product sites, travelers looked at marketing organizations sites such as CVBs, Chambers and offices of Tourism as a key source for vacation information and products.

Look at leisure and the power of packaging to provide both a short-term and a long-term solution to generate revenue for all segments of the travel industry. Based on marketplace indications and the needs of consumers to get away, wrapping up your products and services along with additional partners in a compelling way will provide multiple opportunities.

[The Opportunity Guy provides several programs to companies and organizations looking to develop or create power and grow their businesses through packaging.]

RESOURCES

Two good industry resources:

INTERNET BOOTCAMPS:

Susan Sweeney a well-known Internet expert is running a series of Internet Bootcamps for the Tourism Industry. Dates include December 5 & 6 in Texas and January 7 & 8 in Florida. For additional information call: 1-888-274-0537 or see www.connexnetwork.com

NEWSLETTER:

Travel Industry Indicators is a great monthly analysis of Industry trends and outlook for executives responsible for strategic planning, research and marketing. Contact: Jim Camissa at Travel Industry Indicators, PO Box 6616 Miami, FL 33154, phone: 305-868-3818 or go to www.travelindicators.com for a sample issue, e-mail: tvlind@cs.com

YOU HAVE TO BE KIDDING:

The Energy crisis and the hotel industry food chain

In the late spring several articles appeared in the Travel Industry trades and also national press discussing hotels that are tacking on a surcharge for energy. Over the past several

months I have been zapped on several occasions throughout the country. The surcharge took no time to appear on hotel bills but it is not working its way down the food chain. The lights in California are on, gas prices have been on a steady decline but hotel surcharges are sticking.

Dependable Customer Connections

Creating UFEs — Unforgettable Experiences is the model I believe creates customers for life.

One of the best companies I encounter that produces consistent UFEs is my dry cleaner. Each time a button falls off or a cuff needs to be tacked, I find a note attached to my dry cleaned item letting me know what has been repaired — for free! Since I do not sew, these little extras continue to create an incredible depth of relationship and loyalty with my dry cleaners and me.

One day I mentioned to the store manager that I was using them as a great example of creating unforgettable experiences in my Customer Connections seminars. The manager immediately asked if I was a member of their VIP club. When I replied, “not yet,” she signed me up. VIP status rates a large nylon bag with my dry cleaning instructions on the tag. Each time I bring in dry cleaning, a credit is also given on a frequent customer card. When the card is filled to \$ 150, my next visit is 50% off all dry cleaning. That is usually when I do my seasonal cleaning.

The bag may be dropped off 24 hours a day in a laundry chute on the side of the building and clothes are ready by 5 PM the next day. This is particularly convenient if I have a quick turnaround. If you provide them with a charge card, fees are automatically applied so

absolutely no waiting. The associates are always courteous when you are dropping off or picking up items and address you by Mr. or Ms. when you pick up your clothes.

What am I worth as an average customer to my dry cleaner weekly, monthly or annually? Each visit is an opportunity to make a deposit in my emotional bank account. Through each transaction they solidify a one-to-one customer relationship. They create a seamless and friction-free experience that saves me time. I never argue over the cost I pay and am I loyal, absolutely!

What about your organization? Are the service offerings you are providing to your customers UFEs unforgettable experiences each time you connect with them? Are your connections making deposits in their emotional bank accounts? Are you establishing depth of relationship with them for lifetime value? In reflecting on the consistent UFEs created through Customer Connections, you might say that my dry cleaner lives up to their name — Dependable!

If you would like to enhance or fast track your organization's customer connections, contact Joe Veneto. The program “UFEs, UFOs & U — Your Customer Connections” is a signature session presented to companies throughout North America that demonstrates how organizations can create unforgettable experiences

I am amazed since most of the properties are mid to high market range. I also wonder if the hotels see themselves as renters of warehouse or storage space as opposed to providers of the comforts and services of a hotel? I always thought that lights, heat and electricity were part of the room. Maybe they are trying to recoup the fee for the free break-

fast, stay tuned....Or perhaps several hotel executives have roots in the rental car industry. They win the award for surcharges extras and creative fees on a bill. A recent visit to the Sunshine State produced a rental car bill with 20+% in surcharges...what's next for hotels?

UFEs
Unforgettable
Experiences



A Special Word of Thanks

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to colleagues and friends in light of the recent tragic incidents around the country. I received many calls and e-mails inquiring as to my whereabouts and safety. I am most grateful for your concern and ask you to continue to remember the families and friends of those who directly lost loved ones in your thoughts and prayers.