



PASSPORT TO  
OPPORTUNITY

**BUSINESS  
INFORMATION AND  
TOOLS TO NAVIGATE  
THE EVER-CHANGING  
MARKETPLACE**

VOLUME 3, NO. 2



WHERE IN THE  
WORLD IS THE  
OPPORTUNITY GUY

**APRIL:**

Branson, Mo.  
St. Paul, Minn.  
Mystic, Conn.  
Cleveland, Ohio

**MAY:**

Orlando, Fla.  
St. Louis, Mo.  
Portland, Maine  
Norfolk, Va.

**JUNE:**

Detroit, Mich.  
Cape Cod, Mass.  
Pawtucket, R.I.  
Atlanta & Macon, Ga.

**JULY:**

Schenectady, N.Y.  
Portland, Maine  
Boston, Ma.

## Flying Monkeys or Torturing the Traveler



I was five years old and I saw the future, but I didn't realize it at the time! There I was watching the annual TV event of the year, the showing of the Wizard of OZ. This was a day like Christmas and being the oldest of eight children, I watched my mother over the years silence, bribe and cajole devils into angels for a month prior to the movie. You knew if you missed the movie, you had to wait a whole year before it was back.

During the movie, we always waited for the munchkins, but it was the flying monkeys that were always the biggest hit, (this may give you an indication of the amount of mischief in my house).

Recently, airlines have freeze-framed the traveler experience to look at ways to grow

revenue and charge passengers from every angle. Losing \$7 billion in 2001 and an additional \$7+ billion last year, they are desperate. My most recent week in the skies, certainly not friendly (I didn't pay for friendliness in my ticket this trip) included an eight-leg trip on a Midwest carrier with hubs in Detroit & Minneapolis.

During the trip I had to become an expert at weights and measures. I normally carry

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Dear Colleagues & Friends,

I have finally made it, and my celebrity status was confirmed last week in Mrs. Dingee's second grade class! Twenty-one seven-year-olds were spellbound when the Opportunity Guy, who had been sending post cards to the class since

last fall, actually materialized, a la Harry Potter. As a side note, this is also why I do not read my own press.

It was a great experience, and the biggest insights came when I asked if I looked like my picture. There were also a few little ones who were interested in knowing about the balance on my frequent flyer mileage accounts; times have certainly changed. Can you believe it? And the folks in Orlando would be thrilled to know that everyone wanted to know how often I get to the Magic Kingdom.

I was asked to bring a story to read. My selection was "The Places You Will Go" by Dr. Seuss, a classic. When I returned home I began to think about my story in light of the state of the Industry. We really are on a wild ride and again at a crossroads as an Industry. The fighting is over in Iraq, the economic challenges are still top of mind, SARS a new acronym and top news item, is devastating tourism regions of the world and suppressing travel plans. What will the season ahead reveal? The answer for many U.S. DMOs and suppliers is that it depends on you.

Results for the season are within your grasp.

Most recent studies by TIA reveal huge pent-up consumer interest in travel with over half the respondents on the sidelines waiting to book; translation: possible boom in late bookings, which the industry does not need. However, the economy is also putting a drag on vacation plans, as people are concerned about the future and effects of the job market. Destinations that position themselves as safe, regional, family-oriented places to relax, unwind and connect experientially with the most important people in our lives will win.

No one can rest on the marketing and promotional activities of the past six months and wait for success. Ongoing, continued, relentless marketing will be the order of the day to regional consumers. It will be needed for the remainder of the year. I also believe the softness of the spring will translate to a possible windfall of opportunity that will extend through Q4.

Destinations and suppliers that are top of mind, provide easy and seamless transactions, and allow consumers to get to their vacation as quickly as possible will be the beneficiaries. My suggestion is that you find your inner guerrilla, marketing guerilla that is, and keep your focus on marketing.

Buckle yourself in for a wild ride!



Joe Veneto  
The Opportunity Guy



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## BOOMER THINK TANK

The Opportunity Guy is interested in your thoughts and ideas regarding a Boomer Think Tank. This will be a two-day event in the first quarter of 2004 focusing on the changing demographics and psychographics of the 76 million, chronologically aging (not getting older) boomers. The future of the leisure tourism industry is dependant on the development of creative new and innovative products and services for this group. The purpose of Think Tank will be to bring together experts and speakers on this generation as well as suppliers who are testing and developing product models for the market.

I am interested in receiving comments, ideas and input from you to assist with designing the program content. Also, anyone who is currently testing and developing new products and interested in participating as a session facilitator should also drop an e-mail to [joe@opportunityguy.com](mailto:joe@opportunityguy.com)

two pieces of luggage and a carry-on, but am not conscious of the weight. You see, I have this thing about clean underwear and it's hard-wired in, soooo I take enough pairs for a daily change on each trip.

Upon arrival at the counter in Boston, the attendant told me, "Two bags- 50 pounds each." I said, "Two bags, 50 lbs each is 100 pounds of luggage." Oh no, I was told, two bags, each no more than 50 lbs. I had one large and one small. The larger was 2 1/2 lbs. over the limit. The agent said she would let it go this time, as if I had committed a crime.

As I continued the trip, the baggage berating got worse. I was forced to repack the two lbs. of contents at two different airport stops. And every time I mentioned my 100 lb.- allowance, I was reminded of the tune, two bags 50 lbs. each cha cha cha.... Every time I checked in, it was like going to a Weight Watchers meeting. I was waiting for Florine Mark to come out from behind the counter and tell me I had enough points.

Finally, on my last leg back to Boston, I was again confronted with 2 lbs. I stuffed a few items into the smaller bag to equal out the

weight of the larger bag. Then I asked the attendant if she would like me to step on the scale. She said, "Why would I want to have you do that?" To which I replied, "Because there are probably a bunch of people who weigh a lot more than I on the flight. Since it will take more fuel to lift them off the ground, they should be charged more."

The agent looked at me in disbelief and said, "You have to be kidding." I replied, "Oh no, believe me, your revenue people have already had this discussion and if they could implement it and get away with it, they would." It is truly amazing to me how semi-intelligent people with a scale can be so dumb and yield so much power.

I thought I was back at grammar school; in fact, I know the nuns or the wicked witch of the west trained some of these people. At the end of each encounter I tried to see if their wings had begun to grow. So for now, just remember, big bags won't fly...yyy, they won't fly, big bags won't fly.



## GREAT IDEAS



### HOOKING CUSTOMERS

A recent trip to Cincinnati provided a hall of fame idea. Upon stopping at the information booth in the baggage claim area, I was pleasantly surprised by a brochure called "Cincinnati Layover." Because it is a major hub for Delta Airlines, I am sure that people have a bit of time on their hands from time to time. Who wants to hang out at an airline terminal?

Instead, the CVBs of greater Cincinnati and northern Kentucky (the airport is located in Kentucky, and people in Kentucky love to tell you that) put together a great promotional piece. The brochure lists the

highlights of what you can do in less than five hours along with a map. There are options for transfers as well as suggestions for dining, shopping, museums, sightseeing, entertainment and churches if you are so inclined.

This is the first time I have ever seen such a brochure, and I know that if CVBs around the country, in airline hubs or not, produce such a promotional piece, they may just get the opportunity to have visitors in transit pump some dinero into the local economy. Perhaps a few might like what they see and plan a return visit or longer stay; there are lots of suggestions in the brochure!

# Prize Package

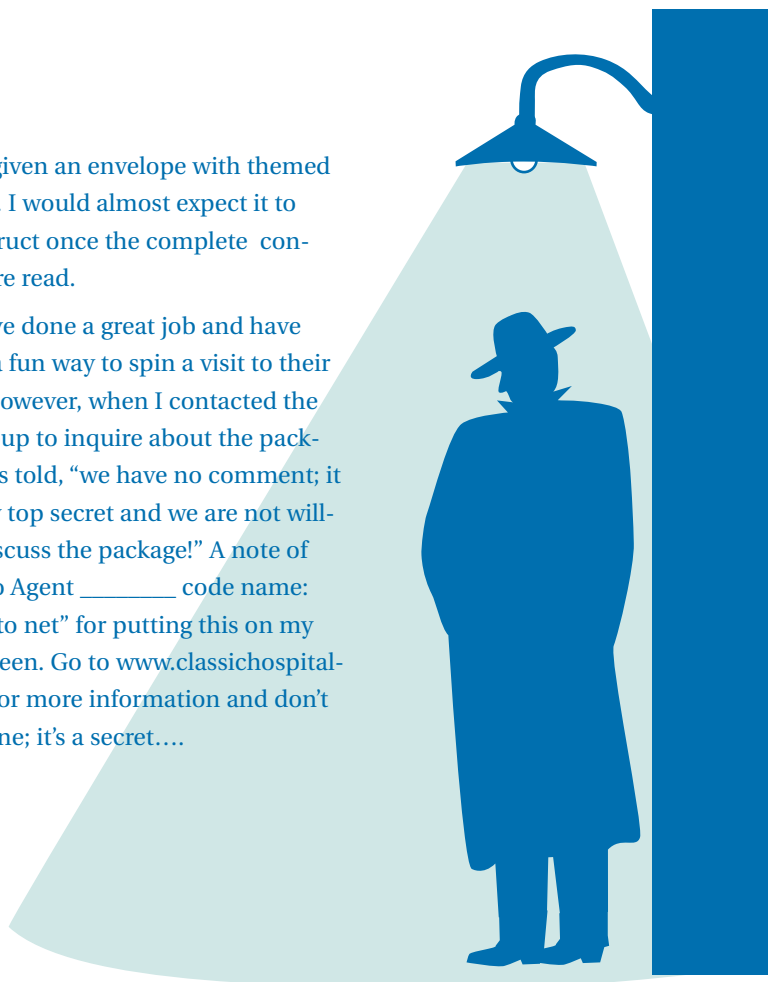
## *Shhhhhhhhhhh, it's a secret!*

This month's prize package comes from Washington, DC. Last fall the International Spy Museum opened in D.C. and a hotel group in the city has capitalized on the idea with a wonderful package. The spy package includes one night's accommodations at a choice of five properties in the group, VIP admission to the International Spy Museum (no waiting in line), complimentary martinis for two upon arrival, and a "Music to Spy By CD" upon departure.

The group has done it up right. When you call the toll-free number, a voice says, "International spy line, may I help you?" And should you be placed on hold, you are serenaded by the music of the Pink Panther. Your written confirmation incorporates spy lingo as it is addressed to agent \_\_\_\_\_. Upon check in to the property of your choice

you are given an envelope with themed graphics. I would almost expect it to self-destruct once the complete contents were read.

They have done a great job and have created a fun way to spin a visit to their hotels. However, when I contacted the hotel group to inquire about the package, I was told, "we have no comment; it is strictly top secret and we are not willing to discuss the package!" A note of thanks to Agent \_\_\_\_\_ code name: "mosquito net" for putting this on my radar screen. Go to [www.classichospitality.com](http://www.classichospitality.com) for more information and don't tell anyone; it's a secret....



### **YOUR TOURISM CALLING CARD**

Several years ago while collaborating with Vaughn Stinson and the Maine Tourism Association (TMTA) on their annual meeting, I came upon a hall of fame idea that should be incorporated into every DMOs' marketing and promotion. TMTA had business cards printed that they distributed to members and people around the state. The cards listed the economic impact of Tourism and Tourists spending to the economy of Maine.

The card listed dollar amounts of economic impact, tax revenue, tourism employment and job creation. Vaughn said the card was extremely useful, especially when meeting political leaders who were unfamiliar with the hard facts in dollars and cents of the economics of Tourism on the state's economy.

Post September 11, the Tourism Industry was noticed due to the lack of visitors and business travelers around the country. The impact is still severe, especially in the business sector. However, the Industry is being noticed once again due to the budget shortfalls around the country.

A recent industry newsletter featured a blurb from the California governor's office to wipe out the state office of Travel & Tourism and use the funds for other areas. Apparently, someone sees the budget as pure expense and not an investment in the dollars generated into the state's economy, tax coffers and employment opportunities. I think the Industry should take an idea from the Maine Tourism Association and have a tourism calling card.

There is too much of a disconnect throughout the country about the impact and benefits of our Industry, and we are not making our collective voices heard!



“The Opportunity Guy”  
Joe Veneto

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## NEW PROGRAM



“Experiences — the Next Generation of Travel Products” was presented for the first time at the National Tour Association’s Spring Meet in Victoria, B.C. This program was developed in conjunction with NTA to provide DMOs, suppliers and tour operators with insights and ideas into the future of travelers’ needs in select market segments. The session provided tools, insights and techniques to move destination products and services to experiences.

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION:

The individual and group travel market tastes are shifting! Consumers are healthier, wealthier and more discerning in selecting travel products and services. They want experiences, options and flexibility when they travel. This session focuses on understanding the psychographics and motivations of travelers to create ideas and solutions for the next generation of travel products. Leverage points, researching below the destination radar screen and successful experiences will provide compelling model experiences. You will leave the session with building blocks to drive your organization’s experience development for the next generation.

### QUOTES OF NOTE FROM VICTORIA:

“ Fresh, informative and leading edge.”

“ Great ideas, I thought of some great ideas while in the session — very inspirational.”

“ An outstanding and unforgettable session!”