



Wrap up your destination's products, services and attractions!

Over the past 30-something years, there has been a huge shift in the way vacations are planned. The annual family vacation a la the Cleavers, where planning would go on for months on end and time was a readily available commodity, rather than a luxury, is long gone. As a society and individuals, we are time-starved. This one reality, more than others, has impacted our lives in major ways including the planning of family travel.

Today, only 24% of US households even look like the Cleavers and the pop culture of recent months has asked us to consider the new



American family. Some news outlets have offered the Osbournes for pedestal positioning while others have indicted the Sopranos. All I can say is I wouldn't go on a free vacation with either

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BUSINESS INFORMATION AND TOOLS TO NAVIGATE THE EVER-CHANGING MARKETPLACE

VOLUME 3, NO. 1



JANUARY:
Portland, ME
Virginia Beach, VA
Lansing, MI
Atlanta, GA

FEBRUARY
Indianapolis, IN
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Hartford, CT
Cincinnati, OH
Savannah, GA

MARCH:
Juneau, AK
Seattle, WA
Helena, MT
Victoria, BC



Dear Colleagues and Friends,
Happy New Year and welcome to a third year of "Passport to Opportunity," a quarterly newsletter on Industry trends, ideas and anecdotes for your business.

As we look ahead to 2003, the buzzword is "Uncertainty." During the past year, we have seen consumers spend. However, they have stayed closer to the nest and bought durable goods for homes while working on their "honey do" lists. Corporations still constrained by profits and financial integrity are keeping their employees' travel grounded or at a minimum. On the international scene the horizon still is a bit barren.

During my Q4 travels, I have journeyed through the regions of the country and the pulse of uncertainty is pervasive. However, the response to similar economic realities facing all of us varies depending on the abilities of people and organizations. The most successful groups continue to understand the importance of key issues. They realize the need to develop a strategy, look at current events and make tactical changes to move forward. They also realize success is predicated on doing many things simul-

taneously and finding out what's working. Successful organizations seem to be those that are once again evaluating their business in relation to the 4Ps: Pulse, Positioning, Products and Partnerships. They are constantly checking the pulse of the Industry and consumers both nationally and regionally. Secondly, they are evaluating their business strategy with this information to determine effective market positioning. Third, they are innovating their products and services to meet the ever-changing needs of customers. Finally, they are creating and solidifying market partnerships to grow their brand awareness and reach a greater number of customers in the marketplace.

Given the pervasive atmosphere of uncertainty, what will you implement in order to offensively create results and opportunities for your organization? As Nike says, "Just Do It!" You may be amazed at what happens.

Wishing you a New Year filled with Opportunities!

Joe Veneto
Joe Veneto
The Opportunity Guy



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one of these family units even if they do keep the fun in disFUNction.

Given the realities of time, most people want destinations and travel suppliers to help them take a vacation. The easiest way to provide this is through travel packaging. Consumers want seamless and frictionless experiences that allow them to get to their vacation as quickly as possible. People do not want to buy hotel rooms; they want to go on vacation.

However, they do need lodging. In most instances they are not motivated to take a vacation because of where they are sleeping. There are exceptions, however.

So how does the Travel Industry get customers' attention? Think about your own vacation planning for a moment. What are the questions that come to mind when you need a vacation? For me the big four are 1) When can I go? 2) Who am I going with? 3) Where will I go? 4) What will we do? By the way, I need a place to stay, but I want booking and planning to be easy. In most cases I am usually overdue for a break and don't have a lot of time to plan.

Destinations and travel suppliers that get it are packaging. Web providers are also acknowledging that the number one request they are getting is for packages.

There are several destination models with regard to packaging. The first is the *posting model*. This involves posting travel supplier packages to a destination Web site. Accessing information and booking the package is done through a link to the site of the packager or via an 800 number. The second model is *outsourcing*, whereby a destination contracts with an outside supplier such as Travel Hero or Travelocity to provide products. In most cases suppliers are hosting a booking engine for commodity products such as hotels, cars and in a few instances attractions. The number of travel packages available is few and far between.

The third model is *dynamic packaging*. This occurs when a destination or CVB provides bookable packages on its Web site and clients can GO on vacation. In some cases like Pittsburgh, PA. the packages are set and bookable. In other instances a menu of a la carte choices is available, and customers can pick and choose the elements they want to suit their tastes and travel needs. There are several CVBs around the country that are testing these waters.

The dynamic package model is where consumers are looking for the Industry to go. They want to book a vacation. Destinations that understand these travel motivations and meet those needs will be the winners. There is however, one caveat; the product needs to be compelling! It is not enough to connect the dots and wrap up hotels, attractions and overnight parking.... Customers want a vacation package that connects to their interests and affinities. It is ultimately about the sizzle.

One of the best examples I have seen recently is the Reading & Berks County CVB of Pennsylvania. They have created a "Girlfriends Getaway" package. It includes a choice of accommodation types, breakfast, choice of spa package, shopping coupon and VF factory outlet nightshirt. When I mention this package in my sessions, the next question I ask is, how many women upon hearing the name and features immediately started to make a mental list

of girlfriends? Invariably dozens of hands go up, which indicates a visceral connection to the package.

This is where destinations need to get to with destination branding and product development. Consumers want it wrapped up, seamlessly and without friction. They want to emotionally go on vacation hundreds of times before they ever leave home.

Regardless of the current packaging model of your destination, travel suppliers need to understand that consumers view their products and services in context. They are tied to the brand of the destination. This means partnership and working together to generate buzz with customers. My suggestion to destinations, “get the people here first through effective marketing, innovative partnerships and creative packages and fight about where they will sleep later.” If you wrap it up, they will come!

The Opportunity Guy is available to fast track destination package development. For more information check out www.opportunityguy.com or call Joe Veneto at 1-800-840-4919.



Prize Package

In December, I had the unique experience of traveling to a warm destination when it was cold in New England. While presenting a session on The Power of Packing for the CVBs of Bradenton and Sarasota, Florida, I heard about an innovative package. I was staying at the Holiday Inn Airport and Marina in Bradenton. The property has a marina with yachts and boats moored throughout the year.

Post 9/11 yacht sales plummeted and the broker still had to pay the monthly mortgage on the vessels. The local harbor-master suggested the yacht broker call Sharon Kingston, Director of Sales at the Holiday Inn, to explore renting the boats

to guests. She came up with a B & B package (breakfast and boat). It includes:

- One night's accommodations for two aboard a Grand Banks Trawler Yacht (42'-52')
- Welcome wine and cheese tray
- A 1½-hour sunset cruise on board your yacht (captain and fuel included).
- Breakfast delivered to the boat.

The yachts have two staterooms, two baths, color TV, stereo and galley.

Rates are from \$199 per couple per night.

Sharon recounted the package during the program and at the end of the session, half the room went to inspect the yachts; several bookings are pending.

Missed Opportunity

In October, I had the pleasure of speaking at the Annual Convention of Carlson Wagonlit Travel. The convention was booked at the Wydham Anatole hotel in Dallas, Texas. Upon check-in I was asked to sign up for the new loyalty program called Wydham by Request. It is an innovative guest program that allows guests to customize their room by selecting preferred in-room amenities. Then, upon check-in at any Wydham property worldwide, your room is customized.

The hotel was hosting about 1,000 attendees from Carlson Wagonlit, mostly owners and managers, a group I would categorize as key economic buyers. We were in the hotel for 2-3 nights each. I spoke to the front desk and sales departments after checking in and suggested the hotel allow the agency owners and managers to experience the product firsthand rather than sign people up.

To create an unforgettable experience (UFE) for the owners and managers, the

hotel could have had people complete the forms and the next day customize their rooms. While this might have been a bit labor-intensive, the ability to experience the product first-hand would have created brand advocates as well as initiate some great viral marketing upon returning home....

Gaining A Fresh Perspective

As we turn the page in our daytimers or click our PDA's to 2003, the year ahead is an opportunity to gain a fresh perspective and create a new start. Perhaps it's the ritual of the countdown to the New Year or the hope that with a new beginning we have an opportunity as we look ahead to paint a fresh palette.

There are, however, new perspectives that present themselves throughout the year. I had such an opportunity in August. It was the middle of summer, and I was off to Florida. My geographic travel course puts me in hot places when hot and cold places when cold. This means Florida in August and Alaska in November/December.

In August, I arrived at Orlando airport for a CVB program, proceeded to baggage claim and picked up my rental car contract. The clerk at the car counter informed me that I would be driving a PT Cruiser. I thought to myself "This is really cool; I always wanted to see the inside of that car, now I have a chance to experience it firsthand."

I loaded my gear in the trunk and jumped in the car. After adjusting the mirrors, I was off. I began my journey from the airport, feeling like I should be wearing a dark, pinstriped suit and be in Chicago in the 30's rather than Orlando in the 00's.

A sign on the road snapped me back to reality "Toll Booth - 2 miles". I began fiddling with my wallet and pulled out a few bills in anticipation. The next sign reads "Toll Booth - 1/2 mile". I began to slow down and line up in a lane for cash and receipts. Then, I reached over to lower the window and there were no buttons. Nothing, nada, not even a switch.

I continued advancing, seconds to go, one more

car and I'm up. Still no switch for the windows, I advanced. I stopped at the tollbooth and opened the door to hand the female attendant my money. She quips "Can't find the window switches?"

"No" I replied "just wanted to get a bit of air!" Then I added "Help, where are the switches for the windows?" She instructed me that they were in the middle of the dashboard panel. I thought, "That's rather intuitive???"

I thanked her profusely, and she replied "You're welcome; you certainly are not the first person to miss the window buttons. It always seems to happen at the toll booth!"

As I pulled away, I mused about what else might be unique in the PT Cruiser? I realized there was something very different about this car, beyond the look and feel.

For the next few days as I was driving my PT Cruiser around central Florida, several people stopped me, wanting to look inside. I was happy to oblige. They all asked how I liked driving the car. My response was "Great!" However, the little detail about the window switches was left out. I really didn't want to deprive anyone of the experience of gaining a fresh perspective.



RESOURCES

During the past several years, a number of quality magazines have extended their brands into the travel arena. They are providing readers with travel ideas as well as bookable products and services.

Yankee Magazine, *The Magazine of New England Living*, provides home and garden features, entertainment and regional travel recommendations. *Yankee* has a unique line of branded travel products called "Best of New England Vacations." More information may be obtained at www.yankeemagazine.com.

Southern Living, *The Definitive Guide for the Ever-Changing, Ever-Expanding South*, extends their brand to the travel category with selected packages as well as bookable travel products. *Southern Living* has 14 million monthly readers. Their website is www.southernliving.com/southern.

Both of these publications offer unique opportunities for partnerships and promotions with Destination Marketing organizations, Travel Suppliers and Package Operators.



The Crystal Ball for 2003

I recently received the "Travel Industry Indicators" newsletter for December. Jim Camissa, who writes on economic indicators and travel industry trends, had a top ten list that I wanted to share with readers. (Reprinted with permission by Jim Camissa.)

10 KEY ISSUES FOR 2003

1. The Economic recovery and geopolitical uncertainties
2. The Impact of a possible war with Iraq and travel implications
3. Consumer spending and the priority of travel away from home
4. Regional travel patterns by consumers and the willingness to travel greater distance by air
5. Corporate profitability and the easing of company T&E budgets
6. Improvement of the hassles and friction associated with Air travel
7. The economic turbulence of the Airline Industry, bankruptcies and service changes
8. Geopolitical tensions and their effect on both outbound and inbound international travel
9. Upward pricing power by suppliers to return to more profitable levels
10. Distribution channel changes and challenges in brick and mortar and on-line, the impact on suppliers and pricing

The Opportunity Guy's two cents:

11. CVBs' response to attracting regional customers and the ability to quickly execute strategies in the reality of a new normal
12. Travel suppliers' ability to capitalize on the changes in customer groups, market segments and distribution channels to create results



RESOLUTIONS FOR THE NEW YEAR

PRESENTATIONS BY THE OPPORTUNITY GUY:

- The Power of Packaging-creating compelling travel packages
- Driving Opportunities-creating results in the leisure Drive Market
- Get Turned ON in the Off Season-developing products and events for the off season
- UFEs, UFOs & U- Your Customer Connections-connecting with customers through creating UnForgettable Experiences.



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Crystal Ball for 2003

and more!

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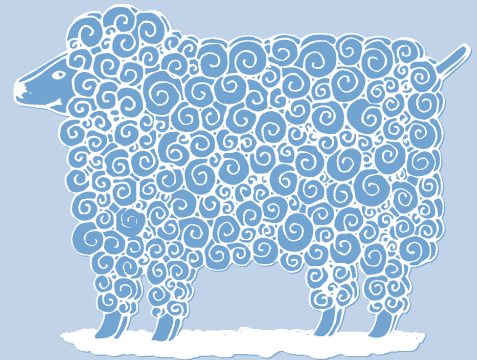
HAPPY NEW YEAR, THE YEAR OF THE SHEEP

The year of the sheep is normally much smoother following the activity of the energetic horse. Things will progress slowly and people will find themselves more sentimental and emotional. It will be a year to relax and make peace with oneself and others. The sheep’s influence will draw us closer to home caring more about those close to us and being more liberal with our time and money.

On the world scene, the year of the sheep is usually a time where things are tranquil and subdued. There is a sense of harmony and coexistence with enemies that will preserve the year from too many upheavals. Wars, international

conflicts and mutual animosities usually end during the year of the sheep. Opinions from moderates and doves are normally heeded during the year.

In business, it will be a time for productivity and imagination with a strong emphasis on the creative. The sheep will pull us closer to the arts and we will value the artistic and aesthetic sides of our nature. However, the pessimistic vibrations of the sheep will also make us oversensitive and fretful over small problems. Be on the lookout for becoming too easily discouraged or hypercritical when things do not go our way.



The sheep’s peaceful ways will slow the pace of things down a bit. It will not be a year of whirlwind activities but rather one of introspection. Join Opportunities Unlimited in welcoming 2003 the year of the Sheep!

From: *The Handbook of Chinese Horoscopes*
by Theodora Lau, 1979

Current and past editions of *Passport to Opportunity* are available in a downloadable PDF Format at www.opportunityguy.com