

HOSPITALITY EDUCATION

September 2011

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Hospitality Education

EDUCATION

Industry Partnership

“Celebrate You” was the theme for the 2011 Florida Concierge Conference held in Orlando Florida this September. The Central Florida Concierge Association hosted this event of over 200 professionals from around the state at the newly renovated Peabody Orlando. A dozen concierge represented the Bay Area Concierge Association along with a number of service providers from our area as well. Concierge are key tourism partners and ambassadors for a destination. In hotels, a concierge assists guests with various tasks like making restaurant reservations, arranging for spa services, recommending night life hot spots, booking transportation (limousines, airplanes, boats, etc.), procurement of tickets to special events and assisting with various travel arrangements and tours of local attractions. In upscale establishments, a concierge is often expected to "achieve the impossible", dealing with any request a guest may have, no matter how strange, relying on an extensive list of contacts with local merchants and service providers. Like any conference, this was an opportunity to not only network with associates and exchange ideas, but also to hear from industry experts to help them be more successful in their roles. Leading the first day of presentations was Dave Mitchell in a series of humorous interactive lectures on ‘The Power of Understanding People, the Heart and Art of Service’. Splashed with data points on ‘metacognition’ or the process of how perception and experience drives behaviors and our individual interpreted reality. Dave guided us through an exercise to understand our own communication style as well as techniques to accommodate and connect with the ‘other’ 50%. Additional presenters who gave us insight on their industries and operations represented Visit Orlando, Visit Florida, The Florida Attractions Association, TSA, American Education Institute, along with several published authors on branding yourself.

Another significant industry conference was also held this month, The Governor’s Conference on Tourism. New to kick off the agenda this year, was a corporate social responsibility (CSR) activity: Invasive plant removal at the Anne Kolb Nature Center. A small but strong and determined group geared up, to clean up, a local mangrove eco-system in the heart of Hollywood, Florida. Several very muddy and buggy hours later, we proudly hauled away twenty plus lawn bags full of invasive weeds suffocating the local mangroves. This was an invigorating start to an energizing meeting of over 500 Destination Marketing Organizations and service providers. Sessions covered technology, social media, emerging trends and outlooks, generational and multicultural marketing differences, converting venues and attractions to tourist destinations, economic competitiveness and much more. Governor Scott even gave an unscripted presentation on his commitment to tourism; and kudos to our industry for helping him hear the message of how important it is to the economic viability of our state.

Familiarization Tours continue to be one of most valuable tools in introducing our destination to groups. Whether it is representatives from our afterhours call center, Phase V or local front line staff who act as concierge for their management rentals, FAMS make a lasting impression. Phase V represents eight other CVB's in the state as well as a wide range of other businesses. Their expertise is expected by every caller and email inquiry. A difficult task when you handle thousands of questions every day. However, their team works hard to prepare the reps through ongoing training, FAQ lists, destination files and great search functions. To make sure our destination stands out, they also committed to a two day tour that covered the entire County with more than two dozen hosted stops along the way. Understanding there is true value in local recommendations once a visitor lands at your property, Travel Resort Service sent staff on a Cultural Tourism Tour. They took time to learn more about the distinctions between some of our most popular and undiscovered art venues in downtown St. Petersburg.

The Chambers of Commerce are some of our strongest allies in promoting the destination. It serves us all to help cultivate open communication and coordinated efforts when possible. Twice a year VSPC hosts a Chamber Executive meeting to share what's going on in our worlds and provide accurate up-to-date information. These are always productive meetings that help us learn how to be better partners and work together more effectively in the future.

Value of Tourism Presentations

New Member Orientation for Clearwater Beach Chamber

HOSPITALITY

VSPC Representation

- Bay Area Concierge Association (BACA) at Gratzzi Italian Grille
- Leisure Forum
- Volunteers in Pinellas (VIP) Coordinators meeting
- St. Pete Chamber of Commerce Visitors Promotion Council
- Toastmaster's Area Contest, Judge
- German writers FAM, PR support
- Big C monthly meeting
- Free Museum Day
- Pinellas 100 breakfast meeting at Raymond James
- MADD Festival of Trees and Wreaths meeting
- Leadership St. Pete 2012 Orientation

- Tampa Bay Beaches Chamber (TBBCoC), Board of Directors meeting

VSPC Professional Development

- National Incident Management System (NIMS Certification): three eight hour Independent Study Courses
- Working with Volunteers, Pinellas County workshop on: Volunteer Value, V.I.P., Integrating Volunteers, Supporting Volunteers, and Conflict Avoidance.