



The foremost bank marketing organization in North America

RESPONSE TO CORONONA VIRUS – COVID-19  
HCI RALLY CALLS  
877-256-0794

**BANKER RALLY CALL - March 31, 2020 – 10 am CT**

**Purpose of the call:**

Discuss how current group travel plans are being impacted and future travel.

There were 21 bankers and 5 PTOs representing 15 states.

GA, IA, ID, IL, KS, KY, MA, MD, MO, MN, NH, OH, OK, WI, VT

Our last Banker Rally Call was on March 20. It has been a very eventful 10 period since that time with many states adding their names to the list of states with stay at home advisories. As of today, there is no national advisory to stay at home, though it is recommended. Many of our members are from the central part of the country, which is generally more rural than the coasts. The virus is now impacting the central states in greater numbers than at our last call.

Agenda:

**I Has your senior management set in place any new guidelines that affect your plans for travel in 2020, 2021 or the future?**

Most of our banks reported that there were no new guidelines instructing them on how to manage the club's travel program in 2020. They are being asked to make the decisions themselves based on what they here from their customers, vendors and PTOs.

A few of our banks have had significant changes with the travel programs being put on hold through October and reevaluated during the intervening period. One club has moved everything in their plans up one year by moving 2020 trips to 2021 and 2021 trips to 2022, etc.

**II Have you rebooked the trips that have cancelled this Spring? For the Fall? For 2021?**

There was quite a lot of different ways bankers are handling cancelled trips. It is probably pretty evenly split between rebooking for the Fall of 2020 or rebooking into 2021. Far fewer are cancelling outright. While the bankers are doing this rescheduling, there is mixed response from their travelers. Many are happy to make the change and others prefer to cancel and wait and see what happens as they can always book again later. PTOs reported similar responses from their bank club customers. Some bankers have cancelled a 2020 trip and rebooked another destination in 2021 with the same PTO.

Tours that were planned around events, such as Tulip Time are mostly rebooked for the same time next year. Oberammergau, which is a once-a-decade event has been cancelled for 2020 and rescheduled for 2022. PTOs are seeing these groups rescheduling for 2022, but bankers are mostly seeing these groups unwilling to have their money on hold that long and are looking at refunds and perhaps rebooking down the road.

While many of the bankers have their 2020 summer trips still on the books, there is a general sense that these will likely cancel in the coming month or two. There is still a lot of hope that travel will return this summer and at the latest this fall.

There is some hesitancy to rebook large ship cruises as both the bankers and PTOs believe that customer confidence in cruising will take more time to bounce back. There is not the same sense for river cruising and small ship cruising. Some decisions are also being guided by the general sense that when travel returns, it will be with very high demand for domestic North American travel (US, Canada mostly) and that European, Asian and other international destinations may take a little longer.

### **III Before COVID-19 happened, you were all planning future travel for 2021, 2022 and beyond.**

- **How have those plans changed?**

Here, too, there was not a consensus of opinion. Some banks that have rescheduled trips from 2020 to 2021 are simply adding them to their 2021 schedule and offering more trips in 2021. Some have replaced their 2021 international trips with those that have been rescheduled from 2020. Several banks are not booking any new tours for 2021 until they see what is going to be happening.

The message here seems to be that each bank is really handling this in very individual ways and the best way to understand it is to simply ask the individual bank.

- **Today, are you planning new trips for 2021, 2022 and beyond?**

There is certainly hesitation to do very much planning. Just too much uncertainty for many of our banks. On the other hand, there are some banks that are using this time to get ahead of the game and plan their normal schedule of trips in 2021 and beyond.

### **IV What sort of frustrations are bankers feeling with partners and PTOs in trying to reschedule or cancel trips?**

Most are not having much difficulty. There is a need for more patience than usual. This is due to the fact that almost all vendors are working from home, and access to everything is a little more time consuming especially if it involves other partners – like tour planners – and they have to depend on others to get back to them. Getting information back from cruise companies seem particularly long, as they face the onslaught of consumer cancellations. They eventually are getting the answers they need. Some are getting very complete answers right away from their PTOs as the PTOs seem to understand the bankers needs the best.

The bankers understand that the PTOs do not want the bank to cancel tours outright. So, they are mostly trying to rebook for a later date or even book a different trip with the same PTO. Having said that, some simply need to get refunds and get the money back into the hands of their members.

Each PTO has their own policies, so bankers should be in touch with the specific PTO to see what they need to do.

### **V What are bankers doing to keep their own customers engaged?**

Several banks are making many calls a day to individual members to just check and see how they are doing and asking if there is anything the club can do for them. Letters have been sent to members about cancellations of trips and club events and also about their own safety precautions at the bank. One even sent out suggested Netflix Movies to watch. Others have been using Facebook to have a “throwback” day in which they show images from past trips. Some have been bringing food to shut-ins.

### **VI How are partner and PTO incentives working to retain banker’s business?**

PTOs are reporting that the concept of “Rebook not Cancel” is showing success in general. However, on some programs where they can extend 105%-125% value on the dollar, the decision to rebook and not cancel is very successful. Bankers felt it was very important that any rebooking decisions be guaranteed at least the same price as the 2020 tour. And that has to be expressed at the time of rebooking. There should be no wait. However, there are also instances where fear is not overcome by incentive. Some customers are simply too afraid to make future decisions too early and prefer to get their money back.

## **VII How can HCI partners (CVBs, etc.) help you?**

Most of the bankers are quite upbeat about contact from partners. Probably best by email at this time, as their time in and out of the bank is pretty determined by the needs of the physical bank. They say it is a great time to look ahead, read new itineraries and be thinking about new trips even if they wait to make a booking.

Most important things were that all prices, policies, and details remain the same for any bank that is rebooking with a partner or partner’s (CVBs) members. Don’t skip details in your proposals and agreements that were in the original trip. Be complete.

The question was asked if it would be valuable to the bankers if the partners and destinations (of trips that have had to cancel) were to send you video of what the bank’s customers would have seen. Not simply promotional video clips, but actual tours and performances that they would have experienced. The bankers thought this would be an excellent idea that they could then forward to those customers since they are mostly shut in at home and looking for things to do. It would allow the bank another opportunity to provide a valuable service and also keep the destination in the forefront of the customer’s mind for when the trip is rebooked at a later date. The examples were given of full-length theater performances like Branson or even Broadway from past performances that might have been recorded.

## **VIII Concluding thoughts and comments**

The general feeling of both the banks and the PTOs was that when this is over and people are welcome to travel freely again, there will be high demand. At the same time, they feel it will start slowly and domestically before returning to normal travel.

About half of the bankers are working from home and some are also alternating staffing at the bank with one week in the bank and one week home.

HCI was asked to continue to Rally Calls in the same ‘every 7-10 days’ format for now.