



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

PARTNER RALLY CALL - March 24, 2020

Purpose of the call:

Identify ways that Partners are being affected by the Covid-19 crisis.

There were 13 Partners on the call representing 7 States and 1 Canadian Province.
These are the questions discussed:

I What changes has your organization instituted?

There was very broad response to this with everyone agreeing it escalated very quickly with new improvements on cleaning and sanitizing to closing businesses, working from home, loss of many jobs at various levels, to others being furloughed until the crisis is over and business begins to return.

II How do these changes affect your job?

Everyone on the call is currently still employed. However, in some cases , dozens to hundreds of employees have been let go or furloughed including management level.

Mostly, our CVBs/DMOs are seeking ways they can keep productive on behalf of their clients. They want to know what they need, when they should call them, when they will begin booking travel again, and so on.

Generally speaking, the Partners have not been following up on their sales leads from the Peer Group Conference out of respect for the bankers' time of crisis. But they don't know if that is necessary or if they should be contacting them. Most of our partners have been focusing inwards towards their own communities and memberships to understand where help might be needed. One of the member distilleries are even making hand sanitizer for the community!

While they may still be working, there is concern that if they run out of work they may fall victim to reduced pay and time.

In most cases, the timeline for reevaluating the situation is about two weeks with the full understanding that this date can easily slide further into the year.

It was suggested that destinations and attractions create virtual experiences of their products and make them available to the bankers that have had to cancel, so they can make them available to the individual guests who are disappointed the trip had cancelled. It might inspire joy and loyalty and position the partner well for future sales.

III What do you feel will be pent up demand for planning future travel?

- ✓ This is the time to plan for pent up demand that is bound to happen after the virus breaks.
- ✓ Use this time to get ahead of the game and get creative.
- ✓ One reported that the USTOA (US Tour Operators Association) is expecting demand to come back by Q4 - 2020 and into Q1 - 2021 regardless of the destinations around the world.

IV Are you reevaluating your budgets, and how does that affect trade shows and marketing?

There was pretty strong agreement by most that spending is on hold; they are cancelling many 2020 travel industry trade shows and summits. There is no extra purchasing going on and no travel right now. Only time will tell when their budgets will support investment in this type of marketing. In the meantime, they need to be creative in ways to deliver free, sensible and sensitive marketing.

V What questions do you want to ask our Bankers?

The general point here is that our Partners are working and anxious to be productive in the specific ways that they can help our bankers. Challenging times inspire creative ideas, and they are willing to be creative.

- ✓ What do bankers need from me?
- ✓ When are they looking at booking?
- ✓ If you are canceling longer trips, will you be replacing with closer trips?
- ✓ Are there any problems you are having with partners in our areas?
- ✓ Are they anticipating a slow start or real pent up interest?

VI What questions do you want to ask our PTOs?

- ✓ What is the message for pricing for next year – are you afraid of increased prices to make up for losses?
- ✓ Should we be reaching out to PTOs to help plan local itineraries?
- ✓ Do you see pent up demand for more tours to be:
 - Closer to home vs long haul tours?
 - Domestic vs International?

There was full agreement that RALLY CALLS and those done by other travel associations are very important and should continue. There were suggestions to have them combined so we have bankers and PTOs on the same calls with the partners. Even a suggestion to create a panel of buyers that can be asked questions if we want to control the number of participants.