

Marketing with Relevance to the Current Economic Conditions

Recently, leaders from key organizations representing the meetings, events and incentive travel industries united to issue guidelines on acceptable business travel practices to companies that have received emergency government lending. I'm sure most of us experienced some "fall out" during the past holiday season with cancellations due to the fact that "it just wouldn't look right". Well, now there's actually a list of "examples of legitimate business purposes for meetings, events and incentive/recognition travel", issued by the U.S Travel Association, American Hotel and Lodging Association, Destination Marketing Association International Meeting Professionals International, National Business Travel Association, Professional Convention Management Association and the Society of Incentive Travel Executives (SITE).

These key organizations state that "the guidelines, built upon existing corporate best practices, are designed to ensure transparency and accountability and protect the one million American jobs supported by corporate meetings and events. Meetings and events are responsible for 15 percent of all travel-related spending, create nearly \$40 billion in tax revenue at the federal, state and local level and generate more than one million jobs. Without the jobs generated by meetings, events and incentive travel, the current unemployment rate of 7.6 percent would rise to 8.2 percent and cost the average American household an additional \$136 in taxes annually."

The key is to now market based on these "acceptable" purposes for meeting and events. Use key words, market to specific groups – take away the notion that people cannot have meetings because it is not politically correct! When reading down the list of the "**Examples of Legitimate Business Purposes for Meetings, Events, and Incentive/Recognition Travel**", write down all of the businesses in your market that conduct that specific type of business and start calling. They may not even realize that their meetings have now been given the political "green light" in terms of being appropriate. If you are not sure which corporations to target, Google Maps provides a great prospecting tool for all of us. Simply put in the zip code or area in which you are searching and the type of business you are searching for, and a full list, complete with phone numbers will be provided to you. Absolutely free! Happy prospecting!

Full List of Guidelines (www.ustravel.org)

This model policy is intended for adoption by companies receiving emergency lending from the federal government.

Model Board Policy for Approval of Meetings, Events and Incentive/Recognition Travel

1. General policy statement: The CEO shall be responsible for implementing adequate controls to assure that meetings, events and incentive/recognition travel organized by the company serve legitimate business purposes and are cost justified.
2. All proposed meetings, events and incentive/recognition travel organized by the company must serve one or more specified legitimate business purposes (see representative listing attached). Each proposed meeting, event or incentive/recognition travel with a cost exceeding \$75,000 must be supported by a written business case identifying a specific business purpose.

3. Total annual expenses for meetings, events and incentive/recognition travel shall not exceed 15 percent of the company's total sales and marketing spend.
4. The amount spent for an employee performance incentive/recognition event shall not exceed two (2) percent of the total compensation of eligible participants or 10 percent of total award earners' compensation.
5. The process for approving meetings, events and incentive/recognition travel, and the procedures for assuring adherence to this policy, will be subject to independent audit to confirm policy adherence.
6. At least 90 percent of incentive program attendees shall be other than senior executives (as defined by applicable Treasury Department guidelines) from the host organization.
7. Performance incentives shall not promote excessive or unnecessary risk taking or manipulation of financial results.
8. All internal meetings or events attended only by senior executives (as defined by applicable Treasury Department guidelines) and/or board members shall be devoted to specific business purposes, and participating senior executives shall be responsible for any expenses incurred for non-business related activities.
9. The CEO of the company shall certify to the board at least annually that the foregoing policies are being followed, and are sufficient to provide reasonable assurance that the company's expenditures for such purposes are not excessive.
10. These policies shall be subject to modification only with board approval

Examples of Legitimate Business Purposes for Meetings, Events, Incentive/Recognition Travel

As with all business expenditures authorized in these challenging circumstances, all proposed expenditures for meetings, events and incentive/recognition travel should be made to strengthen the competitive position of the company in the marketplace and position the company for the creation of long-term value and growth. Below is a representative list of legitimate business purposes for meetings, events and incentive/recognition travel.

- Effective product launches to educate sales force, channel partners and customers.
- Sales conferences and employee meetings to align vision, strategy and tactics.
- Training and staff development meetings – learning environments conducive to adult learning and professional development, improving participants' skills at their trade and/or their familiarity with the company's products or services.
- Employee recognition programs to motivate and reward employees for achievement and productivity.
- Professional conferences that provide networking, education and best practice sharing across companies and industries.
- Performance incentives with clear rule structures that are designed to motivate and reward high performers for exceeding established goals that generate incremental revenue growth for their respective organizations and that are beyond the investment in the program.
- User conferences for customers utilizing the company's products or services to obtain feedback, build networks, provide product training and capture ideas for enhancements to the company's product offerings.

- Product development events designed to generate feedback for research and development purposes.
- Corporate-sponsored events that further charitable purposes.
- Trade shows and similar events that bring prospective buyers and sellers together.
- Strategic, business and financial planning and review meetings.
- Employee meetings as a result of company mergers and/or acquisitions for the purpose of alignment of products, brands and cultures.

For more information on the **Beverly Clark Hospitality Training Programs**, please contact **Lynne LaFond DeLuca** at lynne@beverlyclarkenterprises.com and visit our website at www.beverlyclarktraining.com

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