

Dear Travel Colleague:

Thank you for taking the time to join me recently at ABA's Marketplace in Charlotte, NC. I appreciated the time you took to attend my session on the ***Product Development Runway***.

The program was designed to provide you with a model to use with your local and regional travel partners to prototype, test and roll out new products quickly. Given the uncertainty of the current market, the content covered in the program, put into action, will be immediately useful.

In speaking with operators, travel suppliers and DMOs, the 2009 season will require entrepreneurial skills to quickly change and adapt to consumer behavior. It will also require that you stay close to your customers to understand their motivating factors and buying signals.

Here are action items and next steps for each category of Marketplace attendee regarding the Runway:

DMO 's

- ★ Leverage your destination's brand identity, intrinsic qualities and unique characteristics to build and prototype new products.
- ★ Designate an internal associate at your DMO to be responsible for driving the prototyping and development work.
- ★ Capture market intelligence from operators and travel suppliers to increase your success rate as you develop and prototype.
- ★ Initiate prototype design meetings with travel suppliers to brainstorm and create new offerings.

Travel Suppliers

- ★ Review your current products and commit to prototyping 2-3 new offerings for 2009. (The market is in retrenchment mode for the upcoming season – how are you positioned with your offerings?)
- ★ What new and emerging markets can you test and prototype new products?
- ★ Initiate a meeting with other non-competing travel suppliers to brainstorm, create and prototype new products.
- ★ Contact your local or regional DMO to see what is being done to initiate new destination products. Determine what you can do to be part of the initiative. (If a product development initiative is not in place, work to get one started.)

Tour Operators and Receptives

- ★ Review market changes you have noticed along with anticipated changes you see for the upcoming season. Determine what changes you need to make both short-term and long-term to your offerings.
- ★ Draft several new offerings that you can prototype and send to your best customers as well as clients that tried new offerings last year.
- ★ Partner with DMOs and travel suppliers who are willing to work with you to develop new offerings for your customers.
- ★ Create an internal product development process that will enable you to continually prototype and test new offerings. Speed is key!

Please also find attached the packages that were developed on the Runway during the session. Several were very innovative, given the very short amount of development time.

Some of the packages are a bit “over the top” in terms of cost and marketability; however, you can look at these examples and determine how to scale down the products so they are marketable.

Also, learning materials are available from ABA’s Marketplace web site. In addition, if you would like added content on Packaging, *The Travel Packaging System* is available at www.TravelPackaging.com. The special Marketplace offer is available at \$499 plus shipping & handling, regularly \$599, until January 27, 2009.

Once again, it was a pleasure to have your energy and enthusiasm on The Runway at ABA. Be sure to catch Bravo’s upcoming season of *Project Runway*!

Regards,

P.S. If you are interested, Opportunities Unlimited’s *Passport to Opportunity* newsletter is a great resource to keep you informed. Go to www.OpportunityGuy.com to opt in.

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