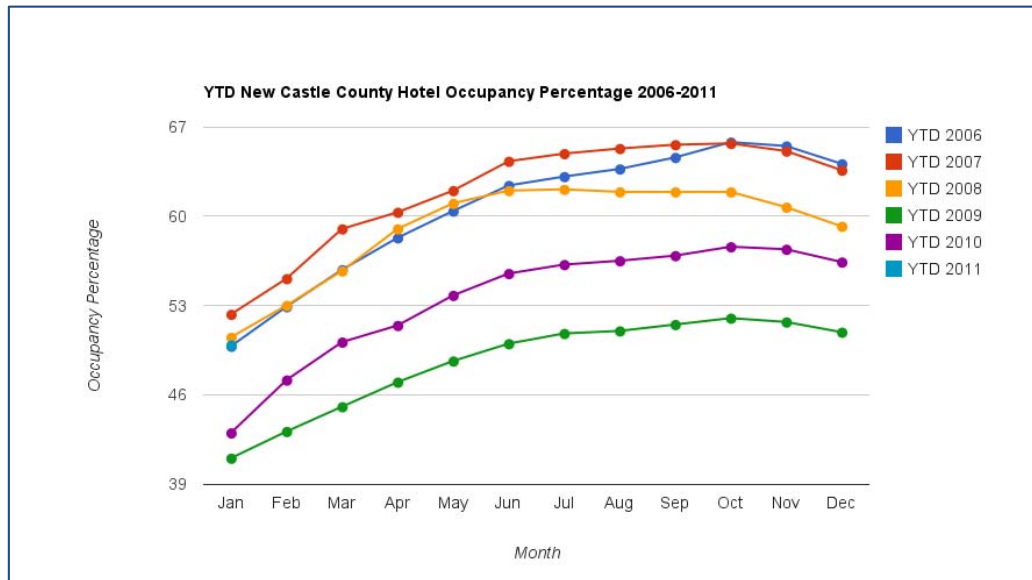


GWCVB Marketing Plan FY12 (July 1, 2011 – June 30, 2012) –Executive Summary

Many of the dynamics from last year's marketing plan are still in play. Occupancy in New Castle County has been slowly increasing; however, the ADR is not. From recent leading industry studies, this is the norm. Now, the focus is now on average daily rate (ADR). Recovery appears to be underway for the industry, but it will take years before we return to the hotel rates of 2006-2007 and see real growth in hotel occupancy.



In March 2011, Mandala Research, LLC released a report that “**auto travelers** are slightly more optimistic about future trips than the general leisure market. Overall – 82% of auto travelers indicate they will take a leisure trip in the next 12 months.” This report supports our efforts to concentrate our marketing dollars within a 250-mile radius. Were staycations a trend or now a social phenomenon? With the gas prices rising, as well as food and other expenses increasing, we may be looking at more staycations.

The GWCVB surveyed the New Castle County Hotel General Managers in April 2011. 29% responded:

- 60% want us to focus on Thursday – Sunday business
- 80% need Fall business / 90% need Winter business
- Business primarily comes from New York to Virginia; some indicate Western Pennsylvania /Ohio Valley and New England region.

As the destination marketing organization for New Castle County, our FY12 Marketing Plan will continue to be a “living” document so that we can quickly make necessary adjustments, while still keeping our focus on our mission. Revisiting the plan after each quarter will ensure that we remain on track with pursuing our goals and strategies.

Tourism is important to New Castle County. These past few years have really emphasized the need and value of travel, tourism including the meetings/convention industry in New Castle County. Tourism does generate tax revenues, generates over 20,000 jobs for our residents and helps sustain our cultural landscape.

Our Marketing Committee consists of Board Members as well as members from the community such as the Brandywine Museums and Gardens Alliance, Riverfront Development Corporation and Deerfield Golf and Tennis Club. In addition, we continue to reach out to our local media sources, such as the News Journal and Delaware Today, for out-of-the-box opportunities.

Our Marketing Plan is based on several key facts:

- ✓ We are a **getaway rather than a vacation**. Easy drive-in destination and with access for Amtrak travelers, including **GWCVB exclusive Amtrak 30% companion discount** (changed from previous 40%).
- ✓ The bulk of visitation comes from the **East Coast drive markets** as Greater Wilmington is ideally positioned within a five-hour drive of one-quarter of the nation's population.
- ✓ Leisure travelers are making more frequent travel decisions in a shorter window of time.
- ✓ We are **an affordable alternative for Meeting Planners** to consider as compared to Tier 1 cities pricing.
- ✓ **Hotel members need assistance more Thursday – Sunday** from various markets and rates. A sign of encouragement over last year when they were seeking business seven days a week.
- ✓ **Interactive and informative website** and effective use of **social media** are vital for consumer planning.

As a result, the GWCVB targets **four market segments**:

1. Leisure Travelers (“Jane” 35 – 54 years old living within 250-mile radius)
2. Meeting Planners, SMERFE (Social, Military, Education, Religious, Fraternal, Ethnic), Weddings and Associations.
3. Tour Operators
4. The Media – Journalists/Travel Writers

We are constantly evaluating the best ways to attract our targeted markets segments to the Greater Wilmington and Brandywine Valley; and we must focus a lot of attention on the changing customer and the behavior of customers.

We will continue our efforts for the GWCVB to “go green” and to encourage our members to “go green” since more travelers, particularly meeting and convention

planners are demanding this feature. (Examples: our office, Members, EscapeMaker green getaway package, etc). We also help as needed as members go after the corporate meetings market with their internal marketing plans. The GWCVB must work towards improving sustainable tourism, as well as civic tourism (“place-based” approaches such as cultural heritage tourism, ecotourism and geotourism).

We will continue to invest in our robust website and database system; Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is increasing on all levels and we are continuing to enhance to keep it fresh. Members have 24/7 access to their member listing and account, but most of all – their leads and referrals generated by the GWCVB. Reporting tools allow members to view what the GWCVB has done for them, and where they can participate more in the activities and benefits of the bureau. *(Need to attach recent SEO report).*

We will utilize the experience of our website team, internal and external, to keep us in front of the information for this area. **Social marketing and e-marketing will be leading tools for moving us forward to spread the word.** The database-generated infrastructure has been built to support the cutting-edge website and a strategic online marketing plan to drive site traffic and ultimately, visits and overnight visits to the Greater Wilmington area.

We are very optimistic due to the high level of interest from leisure travelers, travel writers, meeting planners and motorcoach operators.

All of our efforts are tied to sales performance measurements and goals such as:

- Measurements for e-marketing (#of opened e-mails, # delivered, open rate, #of clicks)
- Measurements for Online Display and Banner advertising (#clicks, click-through rate, cost per conversion, conversion rate)
- Booked Future Room Nights
- Actualized/Consumed Room Nights
- Direct & Indirect Inquiries
- Social followers
- E-newsletter Subscribers
- Total Publicity Value
- Website Visits/Page Views
- Hotel Tax
- Occupancy/ADR
- Membership

Tourism Means Development – a strong tourism industry supports new products and infrastructure. The Greater Wilmington area has seen vital growth in product over the last decade with current and planned developments such as:

- ✓ Expanded restaurant offerings on the Wilmington Riverfront and downtown Wilmington
- ✓ The Queen Theatre & World Café Live
- ✓ Christiana Mall, opening of Nordstrom
- ✓ Crowne Plaza (Holiday Inn Select)
- ✓ Amtrak Station renovations
- ✓ Enhanced Main Street programs, particularly City of Newark
- ✓ Hersha Hospitality's purchase of the I-95 hotel
- ✓ Potential new hotel at Riverfront
- ✓ Potential for National Park

Also – important to note several major anniversaries for the region/area and that the Delaware Tourism Office will be using “History” as a theme from July 2011 - 2012:

2011

- 200th Anniversary of War of 1812 (spring of 2011 through spring of 2015)
- 150th Anniversary, Sesquicentennial of the Civil War
- 100th Anniversary of the death of Howard Pyle (2011 / 1911)
- 60th Anniversary of Winterthur (2011 / 1951)
- 40th Anniversary of Brandywine River Museum (2011/ 1971)

2012

- 100th Anniversary of Delaware Art Museum (2012 / 1912)
- 100th Anniversary of the Delaware Symphony Orchestra (2012 / 1912)
- 75th Anniversary of the opening of Delaware Park (2012 / 1937 – racing)
- 65th Anniversary of the Wilmington Garden Day (2012 / 1947)

2013

- 100th Anniversary of Hotel duPont (2013 / 1913)
- 100th Anniversary of the DuPont Theatre (2013 / 1913)
- 40th Anniversary of The Grand Opera House (2013 / reopened in 1973/ org. 1871)
- 25th Anniversary of Clifford Brown Jazz Festival (2013 / 1988)
- 20th Anniversary of Biggs Museum (2013 / 1993)
- 270th Anniversary of the founding of the University of Delaware (2013 /1743)

2014

- 200th Anniversary of the August Quarterly (2014 / 1814)
- 160th Anniversary of Rockwood Mansion and Park (2014 / 1854)

This outline highlights the areas of concentration for sales and marketing:

Leisure Marketing - Market Segment Priorities:

- ✓ Utilize efforts closer to home (250-mile radius), encourage overnight stays from Kent and Sussex counties, as well as Philadelphia and Baltimore, and the New York metropolitan area. (*Ongoing process*)
- ✓ Evaluate primary target audience segment: (*Ongoing process*)
“JANE” = 35 – 54, Married, either working full-time (professional) or retired and \$35,000 and above with college graduation or higher
- ✓ Factor in children researching online for family trips
- ✓ Continue to evaluate audience and review after campaigns (*Ongoing process*)
- ✓ Enhance Social Marketing efforts – Facebook and Twitter
- ✓ Focus efforts using e-marketing tools (online, e-blasts) vs. print (*Ongoing process*)
- ✓ Build on strategy for organic search and develop a paid search strategy (*Ongoing process*)
- ✓ Review list of relevant keywords for SEO (*Ongoing process*)
- ✓ Learn and capitalize on all opportunities new website offers (sold online tickets for BMGA passports in 2010 and 2011), such as adding music, more videos, YouTube
- ✓ Work with website vendor on niche-specific itineraries (Art, Birding, Bike Tours, Driving and Walking tours, History, Gardens, to name a few) (*Ongoing process, working on a virtual component for attractions*)
- ✓ Track, benchmark and report web metrics for all segments (*Ongoing process*)
- ✓ Consumer tradeshows are not a part of our efforts

Goals in FY 12:

1. Enhance our customer experience – whether e-mail, SEO/PPC, Display, Social, Mobile or Website – goal is to have the same feel and look (branding)
2. Increase the number of overall leisure inquires – either through print efforts, electronic efforts and the digital visitor guide (*Ongoing process*)
3. Target more last minute getaways through our e-marketing efforts via targeted e-newsletters (*Ongoing process*)
4. Include families into our target audience (*Ongoing process*)
5. Build consumer database for future e-news and marketing efforts (*Ongoing process*)
6. Build website calendar to be one-stop for all information (*Ongoing process*)
7. Increase our social media presence (*Ongoing process*)
8. Explore new techniques – traveler on the street and more YouTube feeds (*Ongoing process*)
9. Collaborate with Delaware Tourism Office a strategic leisure advertising opportunities. (*Ongoing process*)
10. Partner with Gannett and Today Media, Inc. with online efforts that will include a 12-week campaign and contest (*Ongoing process, adjusting as needed*)

Some advertising efforts include:

- Drive Less. Do More campaign continues into FY12. More exciting campaigns to roll out, some with contest.
- Amtrak Arrive Magazine – assisting with Destination page for Wilmington
- Utilizing CTM brochure distribution for Visitor Guide at Wilmington and Philadelphia train stations, in addition to other targeted areas.
- Initiate a summer program with hotel members to help with need for July – September (Labor Day) – working on as well as a November – February program
- Items under consideration:
 - Brandywine Valley branding initiative and joint leisure marketing program with Chester and Delaware CVBs (TBD)
 - Television commercials with Comcast; possible idea for Spring 2012
 - Radio
 - A promotion at I-95 Visitor Center
 - I-pad app

Social Media

Often referred to as “Dandelion Marketing”, social media (conversations that happen in blogs, social networks, Twitter and online video forums) is proving to have as much or more of an impact on an organization as an article in a newspaper or a segment on TV. We must keep our finger on the pulse of emerging technology and employ it to our competitive advantage. We have developed and implemented a social media plan.

Key strategies:

- ✓ Continue to engage potential visitors by investing staff time in managing Facebook and Twitter accounts (*Ongoing process*) Consider hiring an intern to expand our reach in this area
- ✓ Grow leisure follower counts to 2,000 by June 2011 (2,357 as of 4/30/11 FB = 1,192 and Twitter = 1,165) (*compared 892 on 4/9/10*)
- ✓ Assist other key departments and members on “how to” and “best practice” for social media

Leisure Info

Top 5 Feeder Markets (website)	Top 6 Advertising Campaign		Social Media (FB)
	Fall 2009	Spring 2010	
1. Wilmington	DE	DE/PA/MD	Philadelphia
2. Philadelphia	NY	NY	Wilm/NC/Newark
3. New York	NJ	NJ	Coatesville
4. Washington	SC	SC/NC	Salisbury
5. Baltimore	NC	Other	Reading
	MD		Livingston
			Chicago

Meeting, Event and Group Sales – Market Segment Priorities

- ✓ Focus on Meetings, Conferences, Associations Reunions, Weddings and Special Event planners (corporate business is not the Bureau's main focus).
- ✓ Group Tourism

We continue to see strong interest in the Greater Wilmington product. However, the reality is that without a full-service hotel next to the Chase Center, we continue to lose business for New Castle County. With the recent discussions of a potential full-service hotel attached to the Chase Center, the GWCVB would consider creating a satellite office at the Convention Center and/or relocate our offices.

According to the Meetings Market Trends 2012 Survey in *Meetings Focus*, recovery in the meetings industry is gaining steam...now is the time to really strategize for 2012.

Trends:

- ✓ Many groups are still having problems with attendance; they are slowly getting their numbers up.
- ✓ Drive locations are still good, but with the recent gas crunch, this could trend positively and negatively. Some groups may stay even closer to their home office.
- ✓ Some associations are planning both regional and larger conventions. Duration of the conference has varied from association to association. More educational programs have been added.
- ✓ Second-tier cities are up on the radar more than before. Some are even competition with first-tier.

The Greater Wilmington region is in an excellent position to capitalize on these trends.

Key Strategy: In an effort to convert business, the GWCVB has initiated a transportation incentive based on a minimum of 100 number of sleeping rooms. This incentive is for new business and has been very successful in driving interest to New Castle County. The GWCVB won a Delaware's Governor's Tourism Award in March 2011 for this initiative. Results for 2009 – 2010 based on the incentive were 1,305 actual room nights and the estimated economic impact equaled \$347,130 (based on actual room nights to date). The economic impact numbers are based on DMAI's (Destination Management Association International's) formula for our area which is \$266 in economic impact is generated per room night booked in NCCo. The estimated definite room nights equaled 6,864 with estimated economic impact to NCCo of \$1,825,824.

The GWCVB will continue to promote this incentive and include as a line item in our budget. Recommendation for FY12, is to increase the line item to \$28,000.

Lost Business Summary: The GWCVB uses a tracking method to identify common themes for lost business. There are 16 different reasons used for tracking lost business with three standing out: (1) lack of hotel at Riverfront (2) convention center costs too high and (3) hotel room rates too high.

Group Tour Market

There are several reasons for a positive outlook in the long run for group travel:

- ✓ 41 million Americans chose not to take airline flights due to expected hassles with flying
- ✓ Gridlock in highly traveled corridors creates an opportunity for the motorcoach market
- ✓ When traveling the 200 – 400 mile radius motorcaches are competitive on time, cost, convenience and now even offering passenger amenities
- ✓ International tourists to the U. S. also provide a growing market segment for tour operators

Goals in FY12:

1. Bring 2,500 room nights in future bookings to the area. Specific goals based on actualized/consumed room nights. *(Sales Goals)*
2. Generate a minimum of 115 qualified sales leads
3. Convert 45 leads to definite bookings *(Sales Goals)*
4. Bring 60 planners/tour operators in on FAM Tours and/or Site Visits *(Sales Goals)*
5. Offer opportunities to members to participate in sales missions and FAMs, with a focused interest in targeting international tour operators located in New York
6. Continue and enhance regional group tour marketing efforts with Chester County and Delaware County CVBs *(Ongoing process)*
7. Collaborate with the State of Delaware Tourism Office in the marketing efforts to the meetings/events and group tour markets *(Ongoing process – when and where it fits with our efforts)*
8. Evaluate and manage social media presence (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube) for market segments

Communications –Market Segment Priorities

- ✓ Quarterly **leisure specific** press releases for Travel Writers/Journalists
- ✓ Quarterly **meetings market** specific press releases to targeted media
- ✓ Quarterly **group tour** specific press releases for group tour media
- ✓ Pitch stories to the leisure media regarding packages, promotions, etc.
- ✓ GWCVB Visitor Guide annual guide

Third party endorsements carry a lot of weight; we will work to maximize exposure for Greater Wilmington's product through aggressive earned media/public relations efforts and a social media strategy. We will proactively pursue media coverage through an

ongoing schedule of press releases, pitches, media visits, MATPRA, cooperation with the Delaware Tourism Office PR manager and networking.

We will also market more regionally to capitalize on the last-minute nature of travelers taking shorter trips. Tracking mechanisms for all media and advertising efforts will be established where possible to measure and maximize ROI.

Goals in FY12:

1. Generate GWCVB press releases quarterly for leisure, meetings and group tour markets per Communication Plan, in addition to individual press releases to the media for high profile events/facilities resulting in \$450,000 in earned editorial coverage. Utilize PR Newswire for press releases. *(Sales Goal)*
2. Pitch stories to New York Times, Washington Post, USA Today, Philadelphia Inquirer, the regional Gannett publications and Today Media that are part of our ad campaigns. Penetrate the Philadelphia market. *(Sales Goal)*
3. Utilize Facebook and Twitter to reach media *(Sales Goal)*
4. Utilize .coms, blogs to promote the area *(Ongoing process)*
5. Expand and refresh our photo library and continue building online photo gallery; make the most of office camera *(Ongoing process)*
6. Implement and publish new Visitor Guide as a yearly publication and approve digital version

Key Strategies:

1. Schedule media in a concentrated period to create a buzz and maximize the budget. *(Ongoing process)*
2. Follow journalists through social media networks to develop customized pitches and engage new media audiences. *(Ongoing process)*
3. Expand press trips to target bloggers and extend audience reach. *(Ongoing process)*
4. Scan all articles and utilize on website under recent articles. *(Working on. Attaching to member's account in member portal)*

Membership – Market Segment Priorities

It is more important than ever that the GWCVB work together with members and partners to promote our shared goals and objectives. Educating members on new features on visitwilmingtonde.com website and member portal are vital.

Regularly and effectively communicate with members and other stakeholders using, whenever possible, electronically resulting in more eco-friendly methods. Quarterly member e-newsletter is produced and sent with ability to track . We hold four marketing and sales meetings, two orientation meetings and at least five networking events. *(Ongoing process, increasing membership to 400+)*

Downtown Visitor Services/Center – Market Segment Priorities

Provide excellent, efficient and consistent front line service for incoming visitors and calls. Now capturing e-mails for e-newsletter. Send weekend calendar of events to members. Manage distribution of Visitor Guide. *(Ongoing process)*

DRAFT