

**Best Practices**

**Convention Center Sales and Convention Center Operations**

**A Report from the Joint Study Committee**

**August 25, 2007**



## Introduction

In January 2006, a group of interested executives from Convention and Visitors Bureaus and representative executives from Convention Center management convened in Phoenix, AZ for an ad hoc meeting to discuss apparent changes in traditional operating models between publically operated convention centers and independent non-profit destination marketing organizations in their respective communities. This initial discussion led to a formal appointment of a joint study group sponsored by the Destination Marketing Organization International (DMAI), formed in 1914 to enhance the professionalism, effectiveness, and image of destination marketing organizations worldwide and the International Association of Assembly Managers (IAAM) formed in 1895 to provide leadership, educate, inform and cultivate friendships among individuals involved in the management, operation and support of public assembly facilities. This study group acknowledges that, although the context of this review focuses on the most common structural model in the U.S., other models exist in some domestic and many non-U.S. destinations.

As with any “best practice” review, it is imperative that industry professionals view this body of work as a set of guidelines as it is not intended to speak to individual circumstances that may be prevalent in any specific destination. There is recognition by the study group that different destinations have unique circumstances that influence policy and practice and that these factors may require approaches that differ from those presented herein, however, the adoption of these practices will advance the industry and enhance the convention center-DMO-customer relationship. Moreover, the review of “best practices” in this context has one underlying objective that cannot be overstated: provide the destination customer with a seamless positive experience from the onset of the sales cycle through move out.

## Background

In most domestic U.S. convention destinations, the existing public assembly facilities are most often owned and operated by a public entity and marketed by a non-profit destination marketing organization (DMO) commonly referred to as a convention and visitors bureau (CVB). In recent years, other management and operational structures have evolved including the emergence of independent for profit operating companies contracted for this purpose by facility ownership. Other destinations have developed independent operating authorities to oversee building operations and finances. Although there are a few instances whereby the center operations and destination marketing functions are managed within a single organizational structure, most convention centers, regardless of the operating model, rely at least in part, on sales and marketing support from an independent destination marketing organization (DMO). These organizations, particularly the domestic U.S. DMO's, often have some exclusive, contracted rights with facility ownership and/or management, to sell the space at some point in the future and beyond, typically 12-18 months in advance. This booking window is intended to maximize yield by contracting space utilization as far in advance as possible for large users. Even though

this structural model may have existed in many destinations for the past 25 or more years, the Convention Center-DMO relationship remains a critical element in destination success and has recently become the topic of discussion on a national level.

Many convention centers developed in the last three decades were viewed by municipal ownership as “loss” leaders contributing essential economic activity that drove new tax revenues, economic benefit and employment from other services and establishments like hotels, restaurants and retail stores. It was largely because of this benefit that cities “accepted” annual losses from facility operations because the convention center was the sole or primary source of new business activity in the corresponding central business district. The post 911 environment is somewhat different and municipal governments and other convention center ownership groups now seek to make operating revenues cover a much higher percentage, if not all, operating expenses for a host of reasons. Moreover, expansions authorized prior to and just after 911 have also created greater expectations to meet debt service in the face of shrinking “margins” due to the current “buyers market”. This shift in thinking has placed greater pressure on Center management to more closely monitor its operating expenses and the sales performance of its organizational partner, the DMO.

Even those convention centers with significant dedicated public funding are under greater pressure to at least cover expenses or make a profit on their operations. Complicating these transitional conditions is the recognition that supply of available exhibit and meeting space across the nation currently exceeds demand, resulting in a “buyers market”. Pressure to perform financially and discounting rental rates to meet the competition are not necessarily compatible, but offer real considerations none the less. Given this unique environment and the fact that most convention centers are owned and operated by public entities and marketed by independent non-profit organizations, the quality of the relationship of the two entities has never before been more critical. Moreover, the need to develop a shared vision and common performance objectives has become paramount to success.

As stated earlier, as greater pressure for improved financial performance has grown, so has the amount of available space inventory as new communities develop new and expanded convention centers. The resulting “buyers market” has exacerbated an already competitive environment resulting in the need to discount rental rates or increase services that can create a competitive advantage. It is within this context that the relationship between the DMO and convention center management are often at odds as their missions and performance evaluation are based on different, often competing objectives. The DMO management is focused on using the convention center as a tool to sell hotel room nights which is often the source of their revenue and a primary source of revenue to retire bonded debt on the convention center itself. Conversely, convention center management is charged with meeting critical financial operating performance that often limits flexibility in rental pricing to respond to competitive realities or reduce demand on the general fund of the associated governmental authority. When the cyclical “buyers market” arrives the quality of the working relationship between the two entities is particularly critical when competing destinations are able to offer the meetings and trade show market comparable space at below market rates.

# Mission

The mission of the study group is to investigate, evaluate, determine and publish “best practices” in the destination marketing organization/convention center management relationship for the benefit of their customer regardless of the current business or operating model.

# Purpose

The study group’s stated objective: regardless of the business model, destination or facility the industry must develop and promote “best practices” in sales and operations that insure a seamless experience for the customer utilizing the destination and the corresponding public assembly facilities. In an effort to define “best practices,” the study group indentified several critical elements that define the scope of their work.

- 1. Convention Sales
- 2. Convention Center Operations
- 3. Joint Accountability
- 4. Joint Advocacy
- 5. Funding and Finance
- 6. Technology
- 7. Training and Human Resource Deployment
- 8. Conflict Resolution
- 9. Certification and Accreditation

Study Group participants were:

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# Critical Issue I – Conventions and Trade Show Sales and Marketing

## Background

Regardless of the differences in operating structures and organizational structure, the one common objective typically shared by convention center management and DMO executives is maximized utilization of the available space at the center. This, in some cases, may be the only one common objective shared by the two organizations due to the differences in reporting structure and performance requirements and expectations. This “35,000 foot level” goal can be shared even in light of these differences and is often achieved from different perspectives and through different means.

Assuming the objective is mutually embraced, efforts to achieve the objective have not often been carefully coordinated and several critical elements are commonly overlooked due to the differences cited earlier. To achieve the overriding objective, it may be necessary to revisit the relationship from the beginning and initiate efforts that limit barriers to success for both parties. As surprising as it may seem, dialogue between the two parties has often been superficial and without regard to core differences in management focus resulting in a separation of thought and action during the normal course of business, and thereby straining the quality of the relationship. To develop the relationship in such a way as to provide a seamless experience for the customer, efforts to establish and build **trust** levels between the two parties require several amendments to traditional practices.

## Start at the beginning.....

1. Make a concentrated effort to establish a healthy working relationship by “wiping the slate clean” and discussing openly the specific objectives of each entity without passing judgment.
2. Commit to the development of a joint marketing plan for the Convention Center recognizing the efforts of the DMO will be focused on convention holding groups outside of the agreed upon timeframe, usually 12-18 months, and that the efforts of the Convention Center sales staff are likely concentrated inside of the same timeframe. Develop an understanding of the importance of the trade and consumer show market to the financial operating performance of the Convention Center and establish a joint commitment to those local and repeating shows that drive critical operating profit for the Center while maximizing available dates for convention holding groups. Consideration of the needs and required cooperation of other industry partners especially the hotel community must be included in the market planning process.
3. Ensure that the plan properly addresses all market segments and commits to a targeted mix of business that aligns itself with each groups’ organizational performance expectations.
4. Ensure that resource deployment strategy is properly aligned with the stated performance objectives and differentiate specific responsibilities for sales by market segment.
5. The co-authored marketing plan should be released with a corresponding budget and detail on the full range of marketing disciplines to be utilized including advertising, public relations, print and digital collateral development, promotional activities, sales trips, FAMS, and trade show attendance, etc. The budget should include both revenue and expense detail including sources of funds.

6. Commit to a joint release of the co-authored marketing plan/budget and distribute to all local constituencies and stakeholders. Build expectations about performance that properly link the two organization's joint efforts and the associated community ROI.
7. Consideration should be given to the joint development of a convention center website that includes all available or developed promotional media in support of the product. The website should also include information on all operational considerations required of any customer/user. Build the one-stop shop for all potential users of both the convention center and the corresponding destination amenities and services available. If an independent site is not practical ensure that the destination site and the convention center site are effectively linked and co-branded to maximize search results.
8. Revisit, amend and insure that the booking policies and guidelines account for and are aligned with organizational priorities, performance expectations and the jointly agreed upon market strategy. Eliminate barriers to success for both organizations and maintain enough flexibility to promote maximum profitability, utilization of space and room nights booked.

## **Convention Sales**

1. The success of the enterprise may be largely contingent upon the development of a "team approach" to the sale of convention center space and other revenue generating services. Delineate market and segment responsibility across sales teams from both organizations and insist on joint accountability for the performance of the enterprise. This accountability formula should benefit all who contribute to the bottom line performance of the space and the associated room nights generated through the sales of events. In other words, the sales team employed by the DMO should have specific revenue goals at the convention center; conversely the sales team employed by the Convention Center should have specific objectives that are aligned with the primary performance objectives of the DMO sales team, usually, confirmed/contracted room nights. Incentive compensation strategies and programs must be mutually beneficial to those team members from either organization with specific sales responsibility.
2. In prospecting potential accounts and new group business for the convention center, DMO sales team members must accept responsibility for "leading" the process. This leadership position requires the collection of the complete history of the clients' performance in other destinations including all specific revenues generated at convention center facilities (space rental, food and beverage revenue at the facility and headquarter hotel facilities, all exclusively contracted services at the corresponding facilities, guest room pick-up, etc.) Much of this information can be gleaned from prior event resumes secured from the prospective customer and/or colleagues from other convention centers and DMO's. It is assumed that this qualifying process will also lead to an understanding of the client's decision making process, organizational politics that could influence the site decision and a thorough evaluation of the competitor facilities in play. To the extent information is available; the DMO sales team should also compile detail on the competitive offering being made to the potential customer and overlay this information with the sales strategy to be jointly employed before an offering is extended to the potential customer.
3. With this research in hand, both team representatives should meet to review all research on the prospective business and mutually decide on a sales strategy and the competitive offering prior to the offer being extended. It is advisable to also employ a business value analysis model to assist in the evaluation of the potential and to guide the structure of any offer. Moreover,

should the sales cycle include an inspection of the facilities, the team members from both organizations should conduct a pre-inspection briefing to review all pertinent data and confirm details of the inspection and the sales strategy to insure communication on the account potential is understood by all parties.

4. It is the incumbent responsibility of the Convention Center sales team to advise and consult with key center operations personnel during the sales cycle to insure the pending offer meets operational capability and compatibility. Any additional data secured from this consultation must be shared with the DMO representative on the account. A joint review of other business contracted during or near the proposed dates should be conducted as a matter of policy. This phase of the sales cycle will identify barriers that will impact the offering and may raise issues relative to maximum facility utilization and customer satisfaction.
5. Every effort should be made by key executives of both the DMO and Convention Center to interface with any prospective customer during the solicitation process particularly during site visits or inspections.

## **Critical Issue II - Convention Center Operations**

### **Background**

Successful convention center operations require competitive “customer friendly” policies and practices in light of the stated goal of delivering a quality, seamless experience for facility users. Recognition of the value of a repeat customer versus the expense associated with replacing one with a new piece of business is a critical principle linked to successful convention/event sales and facility performance. With this in mind, embracing a set of operating principles and practices that maximize revenue opportunities and deliver profitable and quality customer experiences is an objective shared by Center and DMO management.

Many customers have expressed frustration resulting from the apparent lack of coordinated “hand-off” to the operations team after the contracting phase has been completed. There is recognition by all involved in this study that it is necessary to build communication systems that insure the customer is not “lost” in the system once the customer file moves from the booking office to event planning and supervision. The following elements are an integral part of insuring the most desirable customer experience while maximizing operating profitability.

1. Independent customer feedback confirms the reality that event service personnel are responsible for delivering the product the sales team has promised; however, most convention center operating structures limit the operating authority of these key personnel. Efforts to empower event service personnel responsible for managing the onsite relationship with the user should be pursued. The facility user recognizes and appreciates this “single contact” approach and the associated efficiency once the event commences.
2. All key convention center operating personnel with regular customer contact should be certified and cross-trained to minimize the duplication of effort and customer confusion often found during events.
3. Critical communication between the sales and operating personnel should be mandated by management early in the sales process to ensure an offering that is consistent with building

capability and event compatibility especially when more than one user will be conducting business in the facility at the same time.

4. Pre-convention meetings, including representatives of all internal departments and third party event sub-contractors and vendors, should take place in advance of any contracted event. Agendas should include a careful review of the master event resume, a discussion of the objectives of the event, a review of any special needs of the planner or attendees, a review of those outside service contractors and their specific role in supplying the event and to confirm a chain of command relative to implementation.
5. Convention Center operating personnel should conduct a detailed training program for all sales personnel to insure proper understanding of facility capability, event compatibility and operating policies. It is critical that sales personnel understand and demonstrate proficiency regarding what space components should and should not be sold together, and what facility components have limited utility for specific types of events. Training should include detailed explanation of the pricing structure and a thorough understanding of all revenue generating services that are offered by the Center to the prospective customer. A review of all exclusive contracts and their respective business implications to the facility and the DMO should also be reviewed.
6. Any change in operating policy or procedure, pricing structure, or exclusively contracted services should be reviewed with DMO management and sales prior to implementation. An open review of proposed changes particularly with regard to the market implications and potential effects on competitive position should be mutually understood and agreeable prior to implementation.
7. Efforts to seek systems and processes that consolidate customer billing/invoicing should be pursued for the benefit of customer convenience and management efficiency. This process may require amendments to existing contractual agreements between the Center and the local vendors.
8. Pursue systems that consolidate and share customer feedback and evaluation data between the DMO and the Convention Center operating personnel. The evaluation process should seek a customer review of the full destination experience.
9. Efforts to cross-train event management personnel at the Center and convention service personnel at the DMO should be pursued in an effort to guarantee consistent and informed communication with the customer. Moreover, the efforts to create a sense of team between these two departments can strengthen the overall impression of the destination from the customer's perspective.

## **Critical Issue III – Joint Accountability**

### **Background**

Building a successful relationship between the DMO and Convention Center management in many communities is often challenged by the fact that the governing body of each organization is typically independent of the other. This structural “distance” is often quite intentional but not necessarily for reasons that may seem obvious to the casual observer. In the case of the DMO, it has a broad industry/business constituency that it must support in addition to the public sector partner that often is not only the owner of the public assembly facilities, but the DMO's primary funding partner. The public funding in most cases is often tied directly or indirectly with one or more of the same public sources that

either retire the bonded debt on the facilities or support its operations. This funding relationship, often ties the two organizations “at the hip”, however managements’ performance expectations are typically driven from two independent perspectives by two independent governing bodies. This context leads to different performance objectives for the two management teams and is a systemic source of problems that often cause a division of thought and practice in marketing and operating the facility. Moreover, public administrators with direct oversight of the Convention Center and contractual oversight of the DMO funding source rarely understand critical differences between operating facilities and marketing them within a competitive marketplace. The task force believes that some measure of joint accountability will enhance the relationship and build bridges between marketing and operating functions independent of the structural differences.

1. With the support of the governing bodies of both organizations, develop performance objectives that are shared by the management of both organizations. This will promote broader perspective and increase ownership of each other’s successes. Convention Center management’s performance objectives should include indicators that are typically associated with the DMO, room nights confirmed, for example. Similarly, DMO management’s performance objectives should include indicators that are tied directly to fiscal successes at the Convention Center. Common performance objectives will incent management of both organizations to look more carefully at how the convention Center is booked and for what type of events.
2. Within the context of this partnership, jointly author and publish the annual marketing and business plan. The plan should include the complete review of the effort across all market segments including the desired mix of business (public and other trade shows, association conventions, corporate meetings, local events, etc). The plan should define the measures of success for both the DMO and Convention Center management/operations as they specifically relate to the plan. Convention Center management must recognize that the DMO will need to continue its independent market plan development to support the balance of its constituency and address both independent and group leisure marketing, and small meeting accounts that may impact its member hotels and other stakeholders.
3. Within the same context, the year end performance or annual report detailing specific performance successes related to the joint marketing efforts should be co-published and simultaneously released to all constituencies, both public and private.

## **Critical Issue IV - Joint Advocacy**

### **Background**

In many destinations, the partnership between the DMO and the Convention Center has not developed to the degree contemplated by the Study Group. The current environment fostered by governing bodies creates a counterproductive and competitive situation relative to funding since marketing and operating funds often come from the same source. Unfortunately, this competition for funding leads to organizational “separation” and mistrust. To achieve the most desirable framework for a productive relationship, joint efforts to co-promote organizational value to all constituencies should be pursued. How often is convention center management asked to underwrite or help fund public projects in the

downtown core, like a new fire station or police precinct that public administrators justify as serving the interests of the convention center or its patrons? How frequently is convention center management silent on the DMO's budget request from public sources?

The DMO-Convention Center partnership, seeking best practices in marketing and operations should pursue opportunities to publically support the mission of the counterpart and defend the joint program that offers economic vitality to the municipality it serves.

1. Conduct ongoing research through credible third parties to substantiate the full economic impacts of the overall convention enterprise. Establish an understanding of the historical contribution to the area's economic base including employment, state and local tax generation and employment data. Use these data as the basis of a public and community relations program that substantiates the value and importance of the industry on the local economy.
2. Develop a model that defines transient economic productivity and compares the convention and visitor enterprise with other economic generators within the local economy. Build a case for the limited demand on public services generated by the industry and work to elevate the enterprise as an "untouchable" public investment in the local community.
3. Work to expand and cross pollinate the Boards of Directors of both organizations so that influential business leadership is engaged and understands the economic realities, and the synergistic relationship between the organizations.
4. In those circumstances where the public funding originates from the same jurisdiction or tax source (transient occupancy tax) that supports both organizations, co-promote and advocate the needs of each organization within the competitive context of both the marketplace and the program funding needs of that jurisdiction.

## **Critical Issue V – Funding and Finance**

### **Background**

One of the many systemic challenges threatening the success of the relationship between convention center operations and convention sales is the apparent lack of communication and understanding of the funding requirements of each party. Convention Center management is most always focused on the management of operating costs relative to operating income sources. Many DMOs fail to neither fully appreciate nor account for the revenue requirements necessary to meet operating objectives at the Center. The DMO focus most commonly, is within the competitive context and centered on what must be done to capture and confirm a new piece of business. This is at the heart of the challenge in building a healthy and productive relationship between the two entities and should be addressed mutually in an effort for both parties and the enterprise as a whole to enjoy targeted successes.

1. The DMO must support the Center management in redefining measures of success. To this end efforts to structure financial reporting from the Convention Center that includes the full and direct economic impact of the business activity hosted at the Center. Strictly relying on the Center P & L as a measure of success undermines the justification for investing in public assembly facilities at the onset. These facilities are economic development tools that may require ongoing operating support that is dwarfed by the economic spending they create. They

are in effect, export industries that pull investment into the core of the community through the sale of goods and services purchased with dollars generated outside of the community. The resulting economic boost drives new public tax revenues that support public services which the local citizen benefits from, but does not have to support through their own tax payments. These new taxes reduce the burden on the tax payer and benefit the public jurisdiction.

2. Convention Center management must acknowledge and support the DMO funding structure and the sales and marketing requirements associated with the DMO's other community and industry constituents.
3. The enterprise should join hands in protecting against any new or increased industry related taxation that does not directly benefit the enterprise and/or related projects or the convention customer. To this end, the DMO and Convention Center management should seek to develop a process that requires some level of industry oversight for the purpose and use of any industry specific new or increased tax source.
4. Ensure that all sales personnel, regardless of market segment responsibility, fully understand the financial management realities and responsibilities of the Convention Center including revenues and expenses. In this regard the entities should jointly develop a business evaluation model and apply the model to the sales research process to gain an understanding of all potential revenue streams represented by each potential customer program.
5. Establish a business opportunity fund that is part of the annual budgeting cycle. Both organizations should contribute to a reserve account to be used to offset necessary competitive offerings from time to time. Any allocation of funds from this account should be mutually agreeable based on the competitive review conducted by sales prior to the initial offering or in response to a subsequent counter offer.
6. The DMO should assist the Convention Center management team in establishing flexibility from the public administrator in any internal fund transfers that are in response to competitive position. Many publically run public assembly facilities, although structurally aligned with a city, county or authority must operate in a highly competitive business environment. Educating public administrators as to the critical requirements related to "speed to market" is necessary in meeting overall sales and customer service performance objectives.
7. Seek to jointly develop a community ROI model that links direct expenditures and associated tax revenues with the overall operating performance (P&L) of the Convention Center. Divert public opinion from the "public subsidy" or "management failure" mentality by focusing on the full, direct impact of expenditures generated through the attraction of convention holding groups and trade shows. This impact standard should include direct expenditures, tax revenue and direct employment data.
8. Establish policy that commits both entities to common definitions and standards with regard to ROI formulas and reporting benchmarks. Eliminate common references and reporting formulas that reference economic impact and commit to standards that reflect direct expenditures, and associated tax revenue generation and employment.

## Critical Issue VI – Technology

### Background

Technological resources are the cornerstones of any successful sales and marketing effort in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. New expectations on the part of the customer are commonplace and the resulting demand for the interactive delivery of information is driving expansion of the new marketing resources like never before. Simultaneously, event management systems that aggregate all customer data including contracting, master event resumes, billing and invoicing, labor, exhibit layout, utilities, and box office, etc., are becoming the standard. Recognizing these transitions in standards and expectations is paramount to the ongoing success of the sales and operations relationship. Several practices can be employed to maintain pace with the available technology and anticipate the inevitable upgrades that will surely follow course.

1. Ensure that the DMO customer relations management system (CRM) and the Convention Center event management system are compatible and that the data can be accessed at least on a “read only” basis. The entire sales and marketing team must have 24-7 access to the booking calendar and file data. Ideally, file updates on any account should automatically populate the systems to avoid the duplication of effort.
2. Efforts to develop systems that share a common database should be pursued to increase efficiency and sales productivity.
3. Sales and marketing technology including virtual tours of the Convention Center, interactive mapping capability, digitally enhanced and automated email distribution systems that have tracking capability are some examples of the tools that will assist in the sales process and the event marketing necessary to support the customer.
4. Seek systems and processes that integrate all customer related account information from the lead stage through contracting, event management, post event reporting and invoicing.
5. DMO sales representatives must have access and be permitted to place space holds on behalf of the client on a tentative basis pending formal approval from Center management. All approvals for space holds within the approved booking window should be made within 24 hours and confirmed electronically.

## Critical Issue VII – Training and Deployment

### Background

Management interests from both the DMO and the Convention Center committed to achieving a seamless and positive experience for the customer share a desire to eliminate a duplication of effort. Identifying efficiencies through cross training and committing to a thorough understanding of functional differences between staff roles at both organizations may favorably impact deployment decisions. Training efforts within the joint sales effort and convention service/event management areas are paramount to the success of the enterprise. The following practices may enhance efficiency and allow greater flexibility in achieving objectives.

- Members of both teams should have “360 degree” product knowledge of both the Convention Center and the larger destination. This requires cross-training of all team members that interface with the client at all levels from lead development through move-out.
- Management should jointly develop and distribute customer service standards and expectations for all team members with direct customer contact.
- Jointly administer and disseminate deployment strategy that delineates roles and responsibilities for all team members that are engaged with the client at every level in the process.
- Management at each entity should consider involving the other in the interview process when selecting candidates for key positions. This improves communication and builds ownership and support in the development of the human resource deployed in the enterprise.
- Consider the formation of some on-going formal customer advisory system that allows for continuing education on the changing customer needs and expectations. Use this advisory system to evaluate sales processes and procedures and to identify needed infrastructure enhancements that improve competitive position.
- At least twice per year, bring the customer contact teams together and discuss local industry issues to reinforce the joint effort and reaffirm the importance of the convention enterprise; its role in producing economic vitality for the community and the unique and important role the team plays in the community’s success. These joint sessions increase the opportunities to build a sense of team between all personnel involved in the enterprise.

## **Critical Issue VIII – Conflict Mediation**

Although the study group believes that with common objectives and a joint planning platform, conflicts can be minimized, however, there are times that due to the nature of the structural and functional differences between the DMO and the Convention Center, circumstances related to a specific account or group of accounts may polarize the respective management teams. Other issues related to policy or the methods by which policy is applied may also be the source of conflict from time to time. If the relationship has developed appropriate trust levels and disagreements regarding policies and/or bookings arise, employ the use of an independent third party to mediate and assist in the decision making process. This practice may assist in maintaining appropriate separation, insure the right of difference of opinion and protect independent organizational perspective. If efforts to establish a successful working relationship based on trust has been openly pursued and practiced by both management teams, mediation is less likely to undermine the quality of the association.

## **Critical Issue IX - Certification and Accreditation**

Within the spirit of this initial joint study effort, members of the study team believe that ongoing training and education is vital for the best interests of the industry to be properly served. Equally

important is the realization that the primary objective of the study is to enhance the customer experience regardless of the destination of choice. With this in mind, members of the task force have suggested through this effort that the Board's of Directors of both IAAM and DMAI formally encourage the respective education committee chairs to pursue programming that will certify convention sales personnel and convention center operating executives in the best practices identified as a part of this body of work. Further, efforts to offer formal credentials to both the DMO and the Convention Center who embrace these best practices should be pursued and adopted by the respective certification and/or accreditation programs and employed by the members of both organizations.

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