

ONE GOOD DISH DESERVES ANOTHER

Paul Miller, Site President 2014, explains how to create a gourmet incentive travel programme

Creativity is defined in the Oxford English dictionary as “the use of imagination or original ideas to create something”. However, the definition does not explain how to be creative, nor provide the recipe for success. We at Spectra use the following methodology: It takes one cup of patience, three large spoonfuls of trust, a pinch of brain matter, sprinkles of imagination and a block of time.

A request for a creative proposal should not be treated as if one were walking into a fast food chain outlet. The most inspired dishes come from a Michelin-star restaurant or, in our industry, the best propositions come from DMCs where passion, art and flair are nurtured and allowed to thrive. The purchaser of incentive travel can seek out the ‘Michelin-star’ agencies and DMCs in any given destination to create the best gourmet incentive travel programme by tapping into the Site member network.

In this fast-paced and competitive environment, how do we continue to keep creative ideas fresh and stimulating? We do it by looking after our industry’s ‘chefs de cuisine’ and keeping employees engaged, motivated and inspired. There is no better way to stir creativity than to send employees to a Site event, whether it is a local chapter meeting or the annual Site Global Conference, where the cream of the crop convene from around the world. Indeed, a Site event is a gathering of the elite of global incentive travel practitioners and those who attend these events speak volumes about the benefits of incentive travel, the importance of investing in their people and giving back to the industry through participation.

The incentive travel business used to be seasonal with peak months for operations and predicted months to receive RFPs. Today our industry is 24/7, 365 days a year and companies need to be prepared to react to ever-shortened lead times as well as RFPs for programmes three years in advance. On a daily basis we are being asked for creative, cost effective and timely proposals. There is no ‘one size fits



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all’ solution and this keeps things interesting, unpredictable and exciting for us all. To use another dining analogy, when you place your order at a fast food outlet you are often asked: “Would you like fries with that?” When agencies hand over their classic dishes of creativity, many any of us would like to ask: “Would you like to pay for that?”

So what should agencies and DMCs do to realistically respond as best we can? Investment in technology is a key way to be one step ahead or indeed aligned with the competition, especially in a competitive bid situation. Some requests ask for a ‘basic incentive itinerary’ but does such a thing exist? With lead-in times getting ever shorter, it is now necessary to confirm that almost every element of a proposal is available. As applies to hotels, agency and DMC proposals may soon have to include an expiration date due to the demand. It is no longer just the space availability we have to be concerned with, but also the validity of the rates we quote.

So the next time you pick up some fast food or have an opportunity to experience fine dining, consider how your dishes were prepared in each place, the people who served you, the quality of the food, the presentation, coupled with the price you paid and ask yourself what you prefer. ◦

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About Site

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