

Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Humboldt Lodging Alliance

Meeting Wednesday, January 14, 2015

At the Red Lion Hotel, Eureka, California

Present: Mike Caldwell, Donna Hufford, Gary Stone Marc Rowley, Chris Ambrosini, Brad Laws, Lowell Daniels, John Porter, Tony Smithers

Guest: Matt Kolbert

The meeting was called to order at 1:06 pm by Chris Ambrosini, who began with a personal reminder for committee members to be respectful in their discussions.

The minutes of the December meeting were examined and approved (Rowley/Porter/unanimous). Next, the agenda was approved as presented (Hufford/Caldwell/unanimous).

The first phase of the meeting was devoted to detailed examination and discussion of the Misfit Agency proposal, prior to the arrival of Matt Kolbert. Comments are reported in the order given.

Marc Rowley began by asking if the committee likes the direction Misfit has taken in its branding recommendations. John Porter said yes. Brad Laws wondered whether the “magic” motif was similar to the Disney brand, but Lowell Daniels said that our interest in “magic” as a brand came from real input from visitors who describe their experience as magical. John Porter added that the copyright aspect of the brand has to have legal review and that all committee members should review it.

Marc Rowley said that the target audiences need to include urban Generation X and Millennials, not just Baby Boomers. The important niche markets of motorcyclists and destination weddings also need to be included in the plan, it was agreed.

Geographically, our market includes people coming from the North, John Porter said. Mike Caldwell observed that we’re seeing more travelers driving the west coast as gas prices get lower.

Mr. Caldwell was also concerned about clarifying the different roles of Misfit and the Visitors Bureau in the area of social media. There was considerable discussion on this topic, with Tony Smithers saying that the visitors bureau would make its social media channels available to push out the campaign messages generated by Misfit.

Lowell Daniels reminded the committee that the HLA has veto power over anything developed by Misfit that it doesn’t like. Mike Caldwell said that he hoped the HLA, agency and bureau would work together to “raise the bar.”

There was some discussion of campaign launch activities including a party event to be planned and produced by Misfit.

The committee also devoted time to discussing the logistics of managing the agency relationship. Who will be on the other end of the phone? Mike Caldwell asked. Marc Rowley said that the Lodging Alliance

and the Visitors Bureau need to work together on this. Lowell Daniels made a motion to officially name Tony Smithers as the “Point Man” in dealing with Misfit. Chris Ambrosini said that an HLA board member needs to be involved in each conversation. Taking a straw poll, the committee agreed that there needs to be an HLA board member on each daily or weekly agency contact.

The topic of campaign tracking was raised.

Marc Rowley was named the HLA liaison to the Visitor Bureau Executive and Marketing committees.

Mike Caldwell asked if the proposed budget was for a 12-month period. Chris Ambrosini answered that according to the Misfit proposal, the campaign begins in April and runs through November.

Following all this discussion, the committee ended up with a short list of questions for Matt Kolbert:

1. Is it ok to legally use “Wonderland” and the associated characters? Misfit needs to indemnify the Humboldt Lodging Alliance against any legal actions taken as a result.
2. What about secondary markets in the proposal? The committee had suggestions for prioritizing these niche markets.
3. What about marketing to the north? (Medford/Ashland/Grants Pass)
4. What does the proposal mean by “Northern California” as a secondary market?
5. The \$94,000 website in the proposal—what is that? What do we get for that?
6. What about a point person for day-to-day interaction with the agency?
7. What is the agency’s potential for social media access and audience growth?
8. The \$45,000 launch activities in the proposal—what do we get for that?

The committee then took a short break, during which time Matt Kolbert from Misfit arrived. After some pleasantries, the committee got stuck right in and asked Mr. Kolbert the above questions. His answers are given below.

1. Misfit has hired an attorney to explore the copyright aspects to Alice in Wonderland. The book is in the public domain and the book/characters are used widely. We will create our own versions of the characters, he said. Kolbert offered to forward to the committee his email communication with his lawyer on this topic. Furthermore, the use of the word “magic” in trademarks and slogans is not unique, but he will also get a legal opinion on this. Regarding whether “follow the magic” could be trademarked, he replied that we would first have to demonstrate active use of the slogan and later apply for trademark protection.
2. Regarding secondary markets, he said the topic is on the table for conversation. He recommends that the majority of resources be devoted to the primary markets, and suggested adding in secondary markets as the committee feels they become appropriate.
3. Regarding marketing to Southern Oregon, Kolbert said they could be added, but the Bay Area seemed to be the primary focus of the initial campaign, then adding in the Redding/Chico market. “We don’t want to spread ourselves too thin,” he said, adding that perhaps Southern Oregon could be added if funds could be moved from the Sacramento market.
4. “Northern California” was just a label for all areas outside the Bay Area market.

5. On the website: A small amount of the budget is intended to “reskin” the Visitors Bureau website to be compatible with the campaign. As for the rest, “We are selling a magical experience—we would like to be creative in conveying the sense of magic—we want a cool and groundbreaking web experience.” As an example he gave a client whose site was built around video (Drexel University), and then said he would be happy to propose a tiered structure for web development, such as \$40k, \$60, and \$90k, and propose that to the committee. Gary Stone said he had no problem with the dollar amount if they are able to deliver the WOW factor. Kolbert added that this part of the project would be farmed out to a partner such as Buckwild.
6. Agency communication—Mr. Kolbert said that the main need for rapid communication with the agency is for approval of creative products. Lowell Daniels suggested appointing an ad hoc committee to work between the HLA and Misfit, with Tony Smithers as the point person. Chris Ambrosini called for two volunteers from the Executive Committee: Gary Stone and Lowell Daniels volunteered and Mr. Ambrosini appointed them to the ad hoc committee.
7. Social Media—Kolbert said that the social media for the campaign is not about appealing to Humboldt locals, and that Misfit understands what out-of-towners are looking for. He acknowledged that the Visitors Bureau has a good social media following, and said that Misfit would consult and provide assistance on the type of content that the CVB develops in support of the campaign. But mainly, he said, Misfit would develop the campaign social media and give it to the bureau to distribute on its channels. This would leverage the built-in audience, he said.
8. Campaign launch budget, this is mostly devoted to creative development costs, such as a photo shoot, with \$15,000 devoted to the launch activities including a party/event.

In final discussion, the following points/questions were made:

The proposed campaign schedule includes several “dark” months with no media—is this what we want to do? Kolbert replied that the campaign can be adjusted in real time as the process develops.

Lowell Daniels asked about Misfit taking on other clients in competition with Humboldt County. Kolbert said that if ever Misfit was not sure about whether a potential client was in conflict, it would give HLA the decision power.

The HLA’s desire that Misfit use our stock of video and photo content as much as possible was reiterated.

John Porter stressed that RV Parks need to be included in the marketing campaign.

Matt Kolbert, in summary, said that the agency would be providing monthly reports accounting for all expenditures and all activities performed on behalf of the HLA.

Lowell Daniels made the motion to accept the Misfit proposal and budget, with the change of a tiered website development component. Donna Hufford seconded the motion, which passed unanimously including Marc Rowley’s proxy vote in favor.

With no further time, the meeting adjourned at 4:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Tony Smithers