



Business Plan – FY 2008
Year One
June 6, 2007

The Sarasota Convention & Visitors Bureau has taken the three year strategic plan and crafted first year tactics and success measures for those tactics.

Strategy 1: Shift from Traditional Print Advertising to Technology Based Marketing

The SCVB strategic direction will be to invest more heavily in web-based marketing and less in traditional media placement. The SCVB will still need to place print advertising, but it is recommended that these ads be designed with the main purpose of driving customers to our web pages. This should result in lower costs for traditional print placement and allow for a higher investment in electronic marketing

Tactic A Increase investment in search engine optimization and on-line marketing.

Tactic B: Significant improvements and upgrades to the website including video; RSS feeds, specialty pages to support marketing initiatives; enhanced sports and meeting planner pages; mapping; press section; enhanced calendar of events, packaging and ticketing capabilities.

Tactic C: Obtain email addresses for meetings and events in Sarasota to build attendance and build Sarasota's database.

Tactic D: Segment the existing database for more effective customer relation marketing and develop specific communication for each segment.

Tactic E: Provide high quality and prompt lead fulfillment and telecommunications service for customers.

Tactic F: E book visitor guide deployment on the website.

Critical Success Measures:

1. Increase the number of unique visitors to the site by 10% annually.
2. Increase the average time spent and number of pages viewed on the site by constantly evaluating and measuring the appeal of each website page.
3. Increase the number of site visitors that opt-in for e-news, postcard services, or an incentive package by 10% per year.
4. Build the on-line database of registered users for remarketing value by 10% per year.

5. Leverage economies of scale, sponsorship opportunities, and incentive relationships to extend the value of the web-based marketing program by 10% a year as measured in matched dollars.
6. Increase search engine positioning and referrals by 20% per year by investing more resources in key word development, electronic journalism editorial coverage and other like initiatives.

Strategy 2: Social Networking

The SCVB will promote Sarasota County by incorporating the elements of the social networking (Web 2.0). The intent is to build a customer relationship management system with Generation Y as the target. The focus will be to promote the romance and nature-based assets of the county to this sub-market. These younger visitors will form the future domestic market for Sarasota so it is important to begin to build a relationship. These targeted young professionals are upwardly bound, travel often, are technologically savvy, and come as couples, small groups of friends or young families.

Tactic A: Expand Sarasota My Space site and link to the main website. Create additional content such as music, video and blogs on site.

Tactic B: Monitor and market to travel blogs.

Tactic C: Examine options for consumer feedback on the main Sarasota website.

Critical Success Measures:

1. Conduct research over the next 3 year period to measure the increase in visitation by travelers aged 25-44.
2. Conduct research that continuously measures the specific likes and dislikes for this market segment.

Strategy 3: Research

Invest more in visitor and market research and engage a full-service research firm that specializes in destination tourism. Conduct extensive visitor and market research that will enable Sarasota CVB to more strategically target market segments. Using an array of research tools, the Bureau will analyze current and future market opportunities.

Tactic A: Develop baseline PRIZM-like market segments specific to Sarasota County and her communities, quarterly visitor profiles with sufficient volume to provide customer segmentation.

Tactic B: Develop methodology for evaluating the effectiveness of marketing programs and messages with specific sampling and focus group testing annually & specifically looking at festivals, downtowns and nature-based offerings.

Tactic C: Develop a 3 month industry outlook analysis that is presented quarterly.

Tactic D: Develop an annual economic impact statement in a form that is easily communicated to the general public.

Tactic E. Track room nights booked from SCVB generated leads.

Tactic F: Visitor center survey of customers.

Critical Success Measures:

1. Return on investment analysis (conversion studies)
2. Growth in room rate and occupancy, visitor spending, tourist tax receipts and tourism jobs base.
3. Growth in the private capital investment in tourism-related infrastructure. (hotels, attractions)

Strategy 4: Product Development

Expand the Island Time Festival Season packaging and product marketing and develop a new themed festival program. Each year, the SCVB will develop and position two new (additional) packaged travel options based on research in niche market opportunities and travel trends. Work with educational and attractions organizations to develop “learning vacation” products that can be packaged and presented as new products. Develop a technology-based schedule of events that is distributed to hotels and key visitor access points on a weekly basis.

Tactic A: Develop an inventory of existing adult learning opportunities in Sarasota County and identify future partners in the packaging of such travel with a goal to roll out programming in 2009 and 2010.

Tactic B: Develop marketing materials, advertising, online, sales and media relations opportunities around the existing Island Time festival season and apply this integrated approach to the new program.

Tactic C: Work with the various Main Street/merchant associations in the county to identify at least two projects to support and promote.

Tactic D: Assess the current electronic distribution of the calendar of events to hotels for effectiveness, redesign web calendar for seamless distribution of calendar, and expand audience for information. (see tactic 1.b)

Tactic E: Guide festival organizers to string festivals together, create major event each month and build festival brand.

Tactic F: Use integrated marketing to promote the festivals.

Critical Success Measures:

1. Visitor satisfaction reflected in commentary on variety of activities in destination.

2. Visitor use of itinerary option on website (vacation builder)
3. Visitor purchase of packages and tickets available through website and visitor center.
4. Hotels, attraction and restaurant staff have access to information on area events and activities and are able to share information with visitors.

Strategy 5: Visitor Services

Through reorganization and leadership of current staff resources, create a multi-pronged approach to the delivery of visitor services based on the needs of the customer. Expand the beach ambassador(s) model program to other high visitor traffic points in the county. Access to visitor information will be based on visitor needs not membership in the SCVB.

Tactic A: Begin to provide complete access to attractions, arts, dining and activity ticketing on the internet and in the visitor center. This would incorporate sales of last-minute and available unused season or specific event tickets through new computer system and software in visitor center. Continue research as to an online ticketing system that would allow the visitor center to retail “day of tickets” of performing arts – attend DMAI visitor services shirtsleeves. Conduct site visits of three newly expanded county visitor centers – Asheville, NC, Polk County, FL and Baltimore, MD.

Tactic B: Promote Sarasota County as a cultural tourism destination by featuring fine crafts and products from Sarasota artists and offering their work for sale within the visitor center.

Tactic C: Identify potential sites and partners for the expansion of the Ambassador Program. Research location in south county downtown area, Sarasota Main Street as well as possible Sarasota Square kiosk. Need to make sure the future locations are internet accessible and have high visitor traffic.

Tactic D: Visitor guides would be enhanced with a pull out map feature. Balance of the guide would be paid for with industry funds.

Critical Success Measures:

1. Ambassador program expanded to two additional sites by September 30, 2010.
2. Ticket sales through the SCVB visitor center will be offered by September 30, 2008.
3. Ticket and retail sales will increase by 25% by FY end 2009 and by another 25% by FY end 2010.

Strategy 6: Marketing

The SCVB staff would be reorganized and expanded to allow for the development of new programs and packages in concert with identified partners. New staff will have strong direct sales experience in group markets and will have needed expertise in the on-line tourism sales environment. Adequate support staff will be hired to allow professional staff to effectively market the destination.

Tactic A: Reorganize sales and marketing staff division. In FY 08, hire a Director of Marketing and Internet with demonstrated experience in on-line visitor marketing; and one meetings and leisure group sales staff position.

Tactic B: Develop leisure group business in addition to the traditional meetings market by focusing on cultural and nature-based groups closely associated with the Sarasota brand. Identify potential events and meetings that could be attracted to Sarasota County for their conferences.

Tactic C: Expand market positioning of Sarasota County to more effectively present the small walkable, vibrant and unique downtowns. Bundle festival events to activities within the core downtown areas with strong ties to the heritage and cultural offerings. Utilize an integrated approach to market including advertising, promotions, media relations, internet, collateral, promotional items and mailings. SCVB will have leadership role in Florida cultural and heritage tourism programs and the US Cultural Tourism Alliance.

Tactic D: Continue the focus on the key international markets of UK, Ireland and Canada. Use media relations strategies to develop relationships with customers in emerging international markets. Strengthen the media relations presence in the UK by increasing the PR firm's activities, FAM trips, media missions and web enhancements for the Irish and UK market. Return to the strong Irish market for the Holiday World show in January and travel agent sales calls in Dublin and Shannon. Evaluate Belfast as future market.

Tactic E: Continue to support air service development to SRQ through promotional activities, direct sales and media relations.

Tactic F: Summer cooperative and media marketing funds will be reserved to take advantage of market-driven opportunities rather than fully planned and committed early in the fiscal year. Cooperative marketing monies will be designated to support arts organizations collaborative offerings/festivals that are marketed to the visiting public

during June through October. Cultural Tourism Roundtable will provide input on format of the cooperative.

Tactic G: Marketing investment will shift from a traditional brand building advertising strategy (primarily using print advertising) to a targeted, customer focused internet, sales, and customer relationship management. Will utilize media such as CMG American Express Cultural Tourism pieces, NPR Radio, Florida's Downtowns & Small Towns, elimination of brand directory and increase in dialog and banner advertising. Develop new collateral materials and photo shoot to reflect new positioning of Sarasota County.

Tactic H: Continue the successful sports marketing effort with a focus on presenting the strongest sports venues and other assets specific to different regions of the county through enhancements to the sports website, creating a sports e-newsletter, identifying and sponsoring future sporting events, expanding Florida's Golf Coast promotion. Work with SASA to develop an effective method for regular key contact updates on local sports organizations. The SCVB and SASA will regularly update the website with contact info on each organization. Begin discussions with SASA and County on an additional web database assessable to both SCVB and the County's Parks and Recreation Department. Partner with SASA to host educational forums for local sports organizations. The main objective of the SCVB and SASA will be to educate local sports organizations on the benefits of bringing sporting events to Sarasota as well as promoting themselves to potential visitors. Two meetings will be held, inviting all local sport organizations.

Tactic I: Integrate meetings, leisure, travel industry sales missions and shows to accomplish multiple objectives on travel to target markets and to promote initiatives such as Island Time Festival Season, Savor Sarasota Restaurant Week, and 30 Days of Discovery.

Critical Success Measures:

1. Increase the number of group leads supplied to the hotel industry by 10% annually over the current baseline of 114 leads for 21,000 room nights in 2006. (groups will include corporate, association and leisure groups)
2. Increase the number and value of sporting events hosted by Sarasota County by 10% annually.
3. The SCVB will secure a minimum of two nature-based or cultural group meetings annually.
4. The SCVB will work with community organizers to secure and promote at least one monthly event that is attractive to the visiting public.

Strategy 7: Public/Media Relations

Increase the investment in media/public relations efforts. Develop strategy to create enhanced coverage of Sarasota County using new media and technology. Work with partners to establish the most effective method for communicating destination news and

events with journalists. The SCVB media relations staff will establish a working committee of key partners and the contracted PR firm to develop the plan. Analyze opportunities for corporate and leisure group media to develop better editorial coverage for Sarasota county.

Tactic A: Utilize methods for increasing exposure with social networking opportunities. Monitor blogs, increase press visits with bloggers and other advanced media writers.

Tactic B: Form committee of key public relations contacts in Sarasota County industry to determine preferred methods of contact and media relations priorities, round up press releases, individual releases and cohesive destination themed messages. Involve both MMG Mardiks and Gosh PR in planning discussions and implementation. Increase local public relations efforts to increase local knowledge of tourism activities to increase the success of programs such as Savor Sarasota Restaurant Week/30 Days of Discovery. Utilize national tourism week to further these efforts.

Tactic C: Increase the overall number of both media missions and media visitors to the destination. Tie in missions to key visitor origin markets. Coordinate missions with other SCVB travel industry and meetings market efforts. Give a focus to the meetings trade publications and websites.

Tactic D: Host media receptions with combined media and travel professionals to send consistent message about the destination.

Tactic E: Sharpen PR message in US to focus on Sarasota's main assets – moving away from hidden Florida towards message of stylish and cultural, luxury for families, couples and groups, self catering and aspirational.

Critical Success Measures:

1. Increase editorial coverage by 10% against the current equivalent advertising value.
2. Increase the number of qualified journalist visits/familiarization visits to Sarasota County against the current baseline.
3. Develop a better system for industry communication with improvements to a dedicated industry website. Begin modifications in FY08 with completion by 9/09

Strategy 8: Partnerships

Develop and expand partnerships that can leverage the SCVB investment by adding both funding and expertise to specific market initiatives.

Tactic A: The SCVB will continue to provide staff leadership in cutting edge tourism related education and training initiatives through affiliations with state and national destination management and marketing organizations. The focus of the educational sessions in FY 2008 will be to introduce green destination concepts as well as the festival events marketing campaigns.

Tactic B: Support the initiative of the Sarasota County Arts Council to develop a coupon book, by marketing and distributing to visitors through physical and electronic resources. **Initially this will be accomplished by promoting the Arts Council program at the official visitors' center.**

Tactic C: Identify potential partners in South County and inventory public and private facilities. Create a business plan to bring south county specific events to Sarasota County. (e.g. Croquet tournament or triathlon event along Venetian trail)

Tactic D: In partnership with the hotel community, South West Florida Water Management District, DEP, University of South Florida, County Natural Resources and others; encourage the growth of "Green Hotels" and a green destination. In first year, provide educational materials to local industry, gather best practice information, initiate a timeline for green hospitality program and develop collateral materials.

Tactic E: In partnership with the hotel community, Sarasota County Economic Development Corporation and technology companies provide educational programs to help hotels meet visitor technology needs and position Sarasota County as a technology savvy destination. In FY 08 would survey the industry to determine the existing level of technology and what industry has planned. See also tactic 3d

Tactic F: Partner with EDC to continue to support the full-service film and entertainment office. Provide financial match for office funding. Ensure future photography can be used by SCVB and Film office.

Tactic G: Partner with local Chambers of Commerce to distribute their visitor information guides along with the Sarasota County official guide. Develop system of mailing those guides with the SCVB guide and reporting of the database to the SCVB and the Chambers.

Tactic H: Continue the Florida's Golf Coast partnership with the 7 counties from Tampa to Naples. Create a new partnership with west coast counties to promote the area as a summer beach vacation destination.

Critical Success Measures:

1. SCVB will secure at least one commitment for a future event to be hosted in south-county annually.
2. The SCVB/Chamber lead partnership will be initiated by FY 2008.
3. A sampling of the Chambers/SCVB partner lead program will be analyzed annually to determine conversion rates.
4. The SCVB will coordinate a forum to introduce the concept and value of "Green Hotels" to the industry by FY end 2009.

5. The SCVB will work with the EDC to develop an industry forum that will demonstrate the value of securing and marketing Sarasota County as a technology friendly destination by FY end 2009.

Year Two Tactics

Fully implement educational travel packages and distribution channels for the packages

Fully implement ticket sales at visitor center and website

Establish full year calendar of the major festivals tied to the downtown and the accompanying packages

Utilize the dot travel domains to build special interest website

Shift editorial content for the website and e-newsletter in-house for stronger editorial control and to save funds

Examine the role of the visitor guide and the structure for the guide & ad sales prior to the guide RFP – should the project go in-house

Year Three Tactics

Fully market to newly identified niche markets

Full assessment and evaluation of new product initiatives developed in FY 07

Begin implementation of green practices in hospitality industry