



City of La Quinta

CITY / SA / HA / FA MEETING DATE: May 6, 2014

ITEM TITLE: MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR 2014/15

AGENDA CATEGORY:

BUSINESS SESSION:

CONSENT CALENDAR:

STUDY SESSION: 3

PUBLIC HEARING:

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Provide direction to staff regarding the 2014/15 Marketing Strategies.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- Each year, prior to consideration of a new Marketing Plan, the City Council reviews the marketing strategies for the upcoming fiscal year.
- As a precursor to preparing an updated plan, staff prepares recommended "Marketing Strategies" for City Council's consideration (Attachment 1).
- These strategies outline the methods staff will use to promote and strengthen community events, tourism, and economic development over the next fiscal year.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The City's Marketing Plan budget is \$210,000 for Fiscal Year 2014/15.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

The marketing strategies for next year will focus on three main categories: 1) Traditional Efforts (Print/Media), 2) Digital Efforts (Websites/Social Media), and 3) Public Relations and Event Partnerships.

Staff will be preparing and circulating a request for proposals seeking an agency with expertise in media buys and print advertising as the contract term with FG Creative ends June 30, 2014. Additionally, staff recommends renewing the Professional Services Agreement with Graphtek Interactive to continue implementation of the Digital Efforts.

With shown successes from last year's strategies, staff recommends a continuation in several of the outlined strategies. These include:

- "Signature Event" Marketing Opportunities
 - Support local, large-scale events with sponsorships, event program ads, and other collateral and advertising opportunities.
- Cooperative Advertising with the Greater Palm Springs Convention and Visitors Bureau and their efforts to promote the Coachella Valley as a destination in the national market.
- Local Cooperative Marketing Program
 - Provide cooperative marketing opportunities for local businesses to expand their market exposure.
- Local Messaging Campaign
 - Continue a Valley-wide messaging campaign supporting La Quinta businesses and events to encourage shopping, dining, and event attendance.
- Palm Springs Life Advertorial
 - A four-page advertorial promoting economic development and tourism to both the local and regional markets.
- Tourism/Events Brochure
 - Continue to produce tourism/event brochure highlighting events and activities for tourists distributed in over 160 locations throughout the Coachella Valley.
- The Gem
 - Continue to produce the "City Pages" monthly and insert the Annual Report (formerly City Newsletter) annually.
- PlayInLaQuinta.com Website
 - Continue to update the site with new content, photos, blogs, and other links that increase search engine optimization.
- Social Media
 - Continue to engage the users of social media using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, and Google Plus.
- Pay-Per-Click Programs
 - Continue to drive traffic to the tourism website and social media engagement through Pay-Per-Click programs.

- Travel Website Ads
 - Continue to promote tourism and visitors by placing clickable ads on travel websites.
- Public Relations and Event Partnerships
 - Continue to provide community outreach by attending community meetings and hosting a booth at the Farmers Market.
 - Provide public relations for local City events, "Signature Events," City facilities and programs, and as needed for emergency services.
 - Partner with local stakeholders and non-profits to provide promotional support for local events.

In addition, a series of new projects and campaigns in both Traditional and Digital will be introduced in the 2014/15 strategies. Some of these include:

- Local Messaging Campaign
 - Advertising in *Travelhost of Greater Palm Springs* magazine.
 - Place a cooperative business display at Palm Springs International Airport.
 - Updated 30-second TV spot.
- Regional Messaging Campaign
 - Advertisements in drive market publications
 - Including Los Angeles, San Diego, Inland Empire, and Orange Coast magazines.
 - Updated 30-second TV spot.
- The Gem
 - Re-design of the "City Pages."
- Tourism Website Enhancements
 - Vacation Rental Directory
 - Provide an online directory for vacation rentals available in La Quinta that can be filtered to show the available units that participate in the City's transient occupancy tax collection program.
 - Interactive Biking, Art, and Park maps.

Digital metrics indicate that people ages 18 through 55 utilize more digital and social media content, while those age 55+ are more likely to use printed advertising and broadcast media. These metrics drive the marketing strategies to create a comprehensive plan that affects the return on investment.

Economic impact is demonstrated through improved transient occupancy tax, property and sales tax revenues. Increased event attendance, web site visits and social media engagement are indirect indicators of the return on investment for marketing the City and its events.

Staff is seeking City Council direction on the marketing strategies proposed for Fiscal Year 2014/2015. The marketing items selected for implementation during this study session will become part of the City's Marketing Plan for Fiscal Year 2014/15.

Report prepared by: Tustin Larson, Recreation Supervisor

Report approved for submission by: Edie Hylton, Community Services Director

Attachment: 1. Marketing Strategies

2014/2015 MARKETING STRATEGIES

THE GOALS

The following proposed goals will guide the City's Marketing Plan for Fiscal Year 2014/2015:

- Continue to identify new mediums and programs that keep La Quinta top-of-mind as local consumers make considerations regarding where to visit, live and do business.
- Continue to support and promote large-scale "Signature Events" in proximity to La Quinta by providing information about retail shopping, restaurants, and hospitality complexes within city limits.
- Continue to support the Greater Palm Springs Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) with their national marketing campaigns to promote the Coachella Valley as a premier tourist destination.
- Align marketing efforts with the CVB to promote La Quinta in the Regional, and Local markets to increase tourism and improve revenue generation.
- Offer cooperative programs that support La Quinta businesses and maximize their advertising budgets.
- Continue digital advertising, increase interactive content on the tourism website, social media and travel resource ads to promote La Quinta and encourage tourism, business, and event attendance.
- Identify new methods of communication with residents and the media on important City news, events, and programs.
- Coordinate with the Marketing Committee, including the Chamber of Commerce, La Quinta Arts Foundation, Desert Classic Charities (Humana Golf Tournament), La Quinta Resort, Old Town La Quinta, and SilverRock Resort to implement partnerships that maximize and leverage marketing budgets.

TARGET MARKETS

The target audiences and markets to focus efforts on include:

- Adults with disposable income
- Affluent couples, empty-nesters & retirement prospects
- Young affluent families
- Part-time/seasonal residents

- People who like to travel, attend events, and may relocate to the area
- Geographic regions: Coachella Valley, Regional drive markets (San Diego, Inland Empire, Los Angeles/Orange County)

TRADITIONAL EFFORTS PRINT / MEDIA

Marketing strategies are directed to keep La Quinta top-of-mind to both visitors and locals. City staff has focused on efforts that support tourism, local businesses, and continued community investment in La Quinta.

1. **“Signature Event” Marketing Opportunities:** Continue support for large-scale local events in proximity to La Quinta. Events of this magnitude have national/international exposure and attendees often shop and stay in and around the City of La Quinta. Printed advertisements will appear in event programs, pairing sheets, and other event publications for the following events:
 - *Humana Challenge*
 - *Horse Shows in the Sun (HITS)*
 - *Riverside County Date Festival*
 - *BNP Paribas Open*
 - *La Quinta Arts Festival*
 - *Coachella Music Festival*
 - *Stagecoach Country Music Festival*
 - *Palm Springs Restaurant Week*
2. **CVB Cooperative Advertising:** Work with the CVB on cooperative advertising program in order to leverage the City's membership dollars and reach outside markets. Target areas include: Southern California, Northern California Bay Area, Pacific Northwest, Midwest, and Western Canada. The various campaigns involve print, radio, and online efforts to attract more visitors to the Coachella Valley as well as support and ultimately grow direct air service.
3. **Local Cooperative Marketing Program:** Continue to promote this program by working with current partners, and by adding new partners to increase their local and regional market exposure. (City being one of the partners) Some of these include:
 - *La Quinta Arts Festival Program Ad*
 - *BNP Paribas Open Daily Pairing Sheets*
 - *Palm Springs Restaurant Week Ads*
 - *Palm Springs International Airport Display*
2. **Local Messaging Campaign:** Continue a Valley-wide messaging campaign that supports La Quinta businesses and events to encourage shopping, dining, and special event attendance. The multi-tiered plan comprised of television and print will be leveraged with Public Relations, bonus advertising such as extra ads, etc. This effort will run in key months to support events and the

"Shop/Dine/Events" message. While open to the Cooperative partners, this local campaign will proceed with the City message solely should no partners participate. Some of these include:

- *Desert Sun Ads (Daily paper, Weekly Paper)*
- *Greater Palm Springs Travel Host Magazine*
- *Palm Springs Life Magazine*
- *Updated 30-second TV spot*

3. Regional Messaging Campaign: Introduce a regional messaging campaign that supports tourism to La Quinta. The plan includes advertisements in popular regional publications and television. This campaign will run in season to support opportunities for outdoor recreation, "signature events", and entice visitors with messaging support the viability of a driving destination. Some of these include:

- *Regional Magazines*
 - Los Angeles Magazine*
 - San Diego Magazine*
 - Inland Empire Magazine*
 - Orange Coast Magazine*
- *Updated 30-second TV spot*

4. Palm Springs Life Advertorial: Produce a City of La Quinta advertorial for the *Palm Springs Life* October 2014 issue (the City's customary progress piece) – which will also be featured in the "Vision" collateral piece put together through a collaboration between *Palm Springs Life*, Coachella Valley Economic Partnership (CVEP), CVB, and the County of Riverside Economic Development Agency. Distribution is 32,000 in both the local and regional markets with a digital version on their website and a Vision smartphone app.

5. Tourism/Events Brochure: An important component of the Coachella Valley marketing effort includes the annual production of a "La Quinta Area Events" brochure that is distributed at key outlets in La Quinta (City facilities, hotels, visitor's centers, etc.) and through the Valley-wide rack card distribution system in over 160 outlets. The brochure highlights large-scale events, programs, golf, and showcases the excitement and beauty of La Quinta with new, updated photography.

6. The Gem: Staff will continue production of the "City Scene" pages for *The Gem* (a monthly Chamber newspaper that is delivered to La Quinta residents and Chamber members). Promote programs, classes, special events, and important City news related to: SilverRock Resort, Museum, Library, Senior Center, Community Services, Police, and special feature articles such as emergency preparedness, commission vacancies, and special messages from City partners. In addition to the "City Scene" pages, the Annual Report (formerly City Newsletter) will be incorporated into this publication thereby reducing print and postage costs.

DIGITAL EFFORTS WEBSITES / SOCIAL MEDIA

City staff will continue to work with Graphtek Interactive for digital marketing efforts and social media interaction.

1. Increased Interactive Website Content: The City's tourism website, PlayInLaQuinta.com, was re-designed in late 2013 including a complete overhaul of the layout, navigation, and content. The site has become a stronger promotion tool for the City in the 2013/2014 by increasing page views from 24,026 to over 64,000 (a 158% increase). The analytics indicate that over 50% of site visitors are males under age 35 with the top three pages visited 1. Hiking & Biking, 2. Shopping, and 3. Event Calendar (representing over 1/3 content viewed). To maintain a high level of visitors to the website, increased interactive components will be added including:

- *Vacation Rental Directory*
 - i. *Provide an online directory for vacation rentals available in La Quinta that can be filtered to show the available units that participate in the City's TOT collection program.*
- *Interactive Biking, Art, and Park maps*

2. Increased Social Media Engagement: The City continues to improve its standing in the digital world using several social media networks. The most popular by far is the City's **Facebook** page. This network continues to grow and engage residents and visitors with images, news stories, and tourism content. Some key metrics include:

- *Engaged Users: 63% Female/36% Male*
- *Age Ranges: 29% 35-44, 26% 45-54, 21% 25-34, 15% 55-64*
- *Users are mostly Coachella Valley residents, however Los Angeles, San Diego, and Northern California round out the other top markets*
- *Per week over 43,000 Facebook users see content related to the Visit La Quinta, CA page*
- **Averaging 115 new likes per week*

The City of La Quinta's **Twitter** feed has also grown significantly over the last year. Improved posts and engagement have increased followers to over 5,000. Posts include tourism content, photos, news articles, and re-tweets from tourists, business owners, and residents sharing vacation photos, business specials, complimentary tweets, etc.

The newest additions to the City of La Quinta's social media networks include:

- **Instagram**
 - *A photo sharing website where users can "like" a picture and make comments*

- **Pinterest**
 - A network dedicated to “interests”. Users post photos and articles about their interests (Golf, Dining, Hiking, Wellness, etc) and can connect with other like-minded users
- **Google Plus**
 - A growing social networking website where users connect with each other through stories, photos, common interests, and more

These social media networks connect users that may/may not be as engaged in both Facebook and Twitter. Links to all of these networks are prominently featured at the top of the PlayInLaQuinta.com website, will be added to the renovated municipal website, and their logos are shown on printed promotional materials.

3. Pay-Per-Click (PPC) Programs: PPC’s continue to be an effective tool in driving traffic to the tourism website and social media networks. Advertisements are developed and targeted toward a specific audience. It is recommended to continue utilizing PPC programs for both the Local (Coachella Valley) area, targeting hiking, biking, shopping, and a Regional (Inland Empire, Los Angeles/Orange County, San Diego) program that targets visitors, events, art, and golf.

- **Website Pay-Per-Click (PPC) Program:** The Pay-Per-Click program allows the City to purchase sponsored links on the result pages of searches conducted via search engines such as Google / Yahoo / Bing. A link will pop up toward the top of the sponsored link section; attracting more unique visitors to the La Quinta tourism website. When visitors click on the La Quinta sponsored link, it takes them to PlayInLaQuinta.com where they explore activities, hotels, dining, shopping, and golf in La Quinta. PPCs can be extensively tracked and provide valuable metrics for a campaign’s return on investment.
- ***Facebook Pay-Per-Like (PPL) Program:** This year, through a PPL program - La Quinta’s fan base grew from 13,000 to over 23,000. La Quinta ads are purchased and designed to target users that are not already following the La Quinta page. These ads appear under “sponsored ads” along the right side of Facebook pages; when a user clicks on the La Quinta ad, it takes them straight to the La Quinta Facebook Fan Page. Last year over 70% of new “likes” were directly attributed to the PPL program.

4. Travel Website Ads: Over 60% of all travel reservations are made online. Staff will continue to work with Graphtek Interactive to buy ad spaces and design vibrant ads and to leverage travel opportunities for visitors across the country and internationally. Each clickable advertisement is tracked and the images and messaging can be changed instantly based on real-time performance metrics to improve the return on investment.

PUBLIC RELATIONS & EVENT PARTNERSHIPS

1. **Community Outreach:** Continue efforts to reach out to community groups, homeowners association and service clubs to listen to issues and provide city updates. Staff will speak about new programs and facilities that are planned along with a city financial update. The City Staff will also be at the Farmer's Market once a month to answer questions and distribute city information.

2. **Public Relations:** Public Relations efforts will be maintained over the next fiscal year through a strategic plan that leverages media purchases and creates a coordinated effort that results in an increase of coverage for all City events and programs.
 - **Local:** Publicity efforts will focus on all City events that are pertinent to local businesses, residents, and tourists through online calendar listings, email blasts, social media updates, and major press releases when deemed appropriate. Emphasis will be placed on Museum, Library, and City events and programs. Public Relations support will be provided for any issues the City is dealing with outside the parameters of these events, on an as needed basis.

 - **Regional:** Promote amenities surrounding "Signature Events" (golf, shopping, dining, museum, art, etc.) that warrant PR efforts to regional markets (Los Angeles/Orange County, San Diego, Inland Empire). Public Relations support will be provided for any issues the City is dealing with outside the parameters of these events, on an as needed basis.

3. **Humana Challenge:** The successful partnership with the Humana Challenge—including the healthy-themed community events co-sponsored by the City and Humana—will bring many more promotional opportunities for the City in 2014. Continue leveraging publicity in conjunction with the event as well as designing editorial pages focused on the City in the Humana Challenge Program Guide.

4. **La Quinta Arts Foundation:** Continue to work with the La Quinta Arts Foundation team to develop sound strategies that maximize respective advertising budgets and PR efforts while expanding the scope of the overall marketing to reach regional and possibly national markets specifically in regard to the La Quinta Arts Festival. Assist the Foundation in promoting other key events such as Art Under the Umbrellas.

5. **La Quinta Chamber of Commerce:** Continue to support and promote key Chamber events such as the annual Rod & Custom Car Show, Taste of La Quinta through online calendar updates, email blasts, social media updates and other promotional efforts such as print and radio ads. Work with the Chamber on the monthly "City Scene" pages in *The Gem* to communicate City happenings to La Quinta residents and businesses.

6. **Promote Shoulder Season Events:** Continue to promote shoulder season events through in-kind marketing partnerships. These include the Patriot Ride for our Heroes and the Italian Festival. These shoulder season events are intended to reach Valley residents and those tourists interested in coming to La Quinta for a getaway weekend.

