



VISIT MENDOCINO COUNTY

Quarterly Report ~ January – March 2018

Submitted to Mendocino County Tourism Commission, Inc. & County of Mendocino
June 6, 2018



Quarterly Activities Report: January – March 2018

Values: Visit Mendocino County stewards and amplifies the total Mendocino County experience

Executive Summary

The Executive Director resigned at the end of February 2018 and the Board appointed former Mendo-Lake Credit Union CEO, Richard Cooper, to be the Interim Executive Director until a permanent replacement is found.

During the third quarter, the VMC and TheorySF marketing team made significant progress with the new website build with an anticipated launch window of May. The team also worked on an ambient video shoot for the website and is planning a sharable social media shoot for late April.

Staff continued work on the Hotel Adoption Program; it is anticipated that this project will be reviewed under the direction of a new Executive Director.

BID collections are up for the third quarter of the fiscal year. Q3 2018 shows collections at \$206,464 vs. 2017 at \$145,761. A very healthy 41% increase!

Action Plans

The Action Plans contained within the Visit Mendocino County (VMC) 2017/18 Marketing Plan define the goals and measured outcomes for each area of VMC's responsibility to its stakeholders. These areas are defined as:

- Public relations
- Advertising and marketing
- Social media
- Partner relations
- Sales
- Visitor services
- Festivals and events
- Operations and administration

This report outlines the steps taken and the progress made in each area of responsibility for the third quarter of the current fiscal year (January 1 through March 31, 2018). Please refer to the Glossary at the end of this report for destination marketing terms and definitions.

Public Relations

The fiscal year stated goals, quarterly progress, and year-to-date figures for PR.

- **150 million impressions**
For the quarter, PR saw more than **201 million impressions** from stories and features generated from media visits to the county and in response to outreach via press releases, hot sheets, etc. **Fiscal YTD impressions are just below 995 million**, well beyond the projected goal. Impressions are attributable to articles in Forbes.com, MSN News, USA Today, Kilimangiaro TV (Italy), the Weather Channel, among others.
- **\$6.6 million ad equivalency**
In terms of advertising equivalency, VMC would have spent over **\$16 million** to purchase the equivalent print and digital media space. Numbers for the **fiscal year to date are more than \$63 million**.
- **300 articles (“hits”)**
One hundred and seventy (170) articles appeared in print and in online outlets during the quarter. **YTD, Mendocino County has appeared in 846 articles**. All our media articles are stored in a digital archive. Please call our Fort Bragg office if you would like to review any of them.
- **11 press releases and hot sheets**
The PR team issued **4 press releases** during the quarter: MCTC Emergency Board Meeting/Humason; MCTC Announces Leave of Absence/Humason; Culinary Release/Edibles & Adventure; Almost Fringe Festival Unravels. This puts the **YTD total at 11**.
- **19 FAM visits**
For the quarter, PR hosted **12 media visitors**. Along with the 19 hosted in the previous quarter, this puts PR well ahead of its stated goal of 19 for the entire year; **YTD is 48**. PR hosted writers for the Crab, Wine & Beer Festival, a social media influencer covering Visit California’s Restaurant Month, a freelance writer for Food & Wine, two wine writers from Brazil, among others.
- **1 media mission**
The PR team had no media missions during the quarter. The next one planned is the Los Angeles Media Mission with Visit California in April.
- **2 trade shows**
To date, PR has not attended a **trade show** but will participate in the media day at IPW in Denver in May 2018, and attending the Cal Travel Summit, also in May.

Advertising & Marketing

Advertising

This item is mostly on hold pending the completion of rebranding and website rebuild; however:

- To support the Crab Festival in January, **TheorySF developed and ran a targeted psychographic and demographic online effort**. The average click-through rate for this type of campaign is 1/10 of 1%. The

CTR for the Crab campaign was 10% with the worst performing digital banner at 2%. The targeted ad buy was 17 cents per click. The campaign's positioning for festival attendance brought 70,000 people to the site with 922,000 impressions (SF and Sacramento); 9.97% clickthrough on large creative; 2% on smaller digital. With a 7% conversion ratio, the cost per activity was \$2. This compares very favorably with the Mushroom campaign which had .0003% conversions (\$47 each).

- VMC learned the **Family Travel with Colleen Kelly** PBS travel show will air in October 2018.

Rebranding and website

- **TheorySF (TSF) continued website development.** Among more, this involves creating a new Wordpress site, developing custom code, transferring data, checking all content for errant code, quality assurance measures. By the end of the quarter, the site was at Alpha stage of development.
- Rebranding in terms of media “swag,” stationery, etc. is ready for the website launch
- The first piece of print collateral with the new branding, the updated pet-friendly guide, has been printed.

Social Media

The stated goals for social media and outcomes for the quarter are:

- **Total Facebook Fan Base: 65,000**

While Likes are one way to measure success with **Facebook**, a more accurate picture emerges when engagement and reach are taken into consideration. For the quarter, we recorded:

248,498 Impressions

15,136 Engagements

372 Link Clicks

23 Posts

10,804 Impressions/Post; 658.1 Engagements/Post

57,082 Fan Base

- **Total Instagram Followers: 8,500**

Followers: 10,020

Comments: 249

Likes:13,892

Posts: 26

Avg. Likes per Post: 534

Partner Relations

Goals and progress for the quarter include:

- **Reinstitution of a monthly Executive Director report sent to partners and posted on the MendocinoTourism.org website**
With the change in leadership, no monthly reports have been issued to partners. It is anticipated this activity will re-commence with the appointment of a new Executive Director.
- **Quarterly columns in local media regarding tourism and its benefits to the community**
In the future, the partner newsletters can be repurposed for a **quarterly column** in local press.
- **Continue the “hotel adoption program” whereby VMC staff will visit lodging properties to gain a contact, gather information, and learn about the property**
The hotel adoption program is on hold for reasons unknown to this writer.
- **Complete design on partner brochure to help business owners and community members better understand the mission of VMC**
A **draft of the partner brochure** has been created. Layout and printing of the brochure is suspended until the new branding has been launched and the new ED has had the opportunity to review.
- **Attend Chambers of Commerce meetings, city promotional meetings, and events to gain and share ideas, and show community support**
Staff continues to attend **regular meetings** with Chambers of Commerce (Ukiah, Willits, and Mendocino Coast) and Visit Ukiah. Staff is also on the Board of the **Anderson Valley Winegrowers Association** and attends their monthly meetings.
- **Explore and research the future promotion of recreational cannabis use throughout the County and region by being a leading entity to capitalize on this potential new market**
In December 2017, the MCTC Board of Directors transferred **management and coordination of cannabis tourism** to the Mendocino County Promotional Alliance (MCPA). This item is no longer under the purview of Visit Mendocino County.

Sales

For FY 2017/2018, VMC’s sales goals are to:

- **Book 5 new meetings in the county**
Quarter - 0 - YTD - 0
Note: **5 RFPs responded to** but all were rejected by the requestor due to lack of transportation options, inadequate meeting space, lack of requisite rooms, distance from major airports and lack of a coordinated database.
- **Increase international visitation in terms of dollars spent by 6% to 8%**
Year over year 2017 vs. 2016 Visa Vue international numbers show a YOY increase of 22.8% and for domestic travelers, an 11.8% YOY increase.

- **Facilitate 10 new contracts between county hotels and receptives**
Q- 6 - YTD - 14. Have created at least 30 contracts between hotels and receptives/tour operators but there are an additional nine contracts pending and in process of negotiation.
- **Promote Mendocino County to 1,000 retail travel professionals**
YTD - 1,000 from the UK, Ireland, Mexico and Canada, due almost entirely to activities of the North Coast Tourism Council.
- **Promote Mendocino County to 150 tour operators, receptives and OTAs**
Q- 150 - YTD - 300, again almost entirely due to activities of the North Coast Tourism Council.
- **Promote Mendocino County to 10-20 international media**
Q - 8 - YTD - 33, due almost entirely to activities of the North Coast Tourism Council and Visit CA Austrian and Japanese FAMs.
- **Promote Mendocino County to all 14 international offices of Visit California**
Met with six representatives at travel trade events, including Canada and Mexico.
- **Conduct 8 FAMs**
YTD- 3 These FAMs were from Austria, the U.K., and Japan.
- **Attend 6 consumer trade shows**
YTD - 4
Luz Harvey and Richard Strom attended the San Diego Travel and Adventure Consumer Show in January; Richard attended the Sportsmen’s Show in February; Vanlee Waters and Richard attended the Bay Area Travel & Adventure Show in Santa Clara. A number of stakeholders participated by providing giveaways.
- **Add 10,000 names to our consumer database**
2,673 added YTD.
- **Facilitate the creation of 10 new packages that include Mendocino County**
Q - 1; YTD- 5
Sealed the deal on a up to two-night package with Visit Oakland and working to complete another package with San Luis Obispo on the Central Coast.

Visitor Services

Goals and outcomes for the fiscal year to date are:

- **Complete and distribute new tear-off maps for both Willits and Ukiah (100,000 for each city) to area hotels and businesses**
Willits complete; Ukiah has a few details to complete.

- **Continue to distribute North and South Coast tear-off maps**
Staff (LH) distributed tear off maps at San Diego (January) and Bay Area (February) consumer travel shows, and Aromatic White Wine Festival in Boonville (February) as well as to tasting rooms along Highways 101 and 128.
- **Investigate placement of a third gateway sign on Highway 128**
This project has stalled and it is not anticipated it will occur this fiscal year.
- **Distribute festival guides and other festival collateral**
Festival **guides were distributed** in Q2.
- **Provide 10,000 updated visitor guides to out-of-county locations**
Staff (LH) distributed Visitor Guides and other Mendocino County collateral to out-of-county locations.
- **Begin updating the popular Mendocino County pet guide and continue distribution**
The pet guide has been printed and distributed to out-of-county pet shops and destinations.
- **Dissemination of the mini visitor guide at events**
The **mini guide continues to be a great alternative** to the larger visitor guides, particularly internationally. In February, staff worked the Aromatic White Wine Festival in Boonville.
- **Participate in various in-county mixers, festivals and events**
Staff and the Marketing & Communications Coordinator attended and worked at the Crab Cake Cook-off in January. Staff met with Destination Hopland.
- In addition, Richard Strom and the Marketing & Communications Coordinator **updated the annual Calendar of Events**, which is in the design process.
- **Assist in driving website visitation and increasing unique visitors**
Everything we do is towards this end. [AdeG: direct quote from staff input.]

festivals & events

Fiscal year 2017/2018 goals and outcomes for the quarter are:

- **Build upon and enhance existing post-festival survey methods to gauge stakeholders' experience by using quantifiable criteria that can be used for yearly comparison purposes**
Staff is continuing to search for a survey method that is quantifiable and easy for the user. The quantifiable part is proving to be a challenge since not all lodging establishments are equipped with booking software that makes quick YOY occupancy percentage searches for key dates, easy for their staff. This is the information the post festival surveys need to gather to gauge the efficacy of VMC umbrella events on lodging. Another obstacle to overcome is lodging's hesitancy to provide numbers they view as proprietary. Staff hopes the lodging owners on the MCTC BoD, can offer some suggestions on how best to gather the data needed for quantified surveys, or give staff direction on where to best to search for any industry standard that might provide the necessary information.

- **Collaborate with stakeholders to create unique signature events supported by a variety of tangential offerings whose goal is increasing attendance by visitors and participation by partners at existing festivals and events.**

From January through March, staff worked with the producers of the Dystopian Prom and UCHR's Nature Fest/Bio Blitz event, two signature events for the Almost Fringe Festival to expand their event's offerings for the 2018 Festival.

- **Develop a new signature event for the Mushroom, Wine & Beer Festival.**
The Festival Committee is meeting to **discuss a rethink for this particular festival.**
- **Continue to encourage lodging owners to offer incentives for extended stays during festivals.**
In March, staff recruited **lodging specials from 13 properties** throughout the county to provide specials for the Almost Fringe Festival.
- **Work with local non-profits and wine regions to encourage larger tourist attracting events such as Mendocino Coast Hospital Foundation's Winesong and Anderson Valley Winegrowers Association's Pinot Noir Festival.**
Staff serves as hospitality representative on AVWA Board and has worked with them in the Aromatic White Wine Festival, the Taste of Anderson Valley, and the Pinot Noir Festival relocation to Camp Navarro.
- **Increase partners' buy-in by developing new ideas for festivals and events.**
From January through March, **staff outreached extensively into commercial districts countywide to expand 2018 Almost Fringe Festival offerings.** This resulted in 90 events this year. Compared to 81 events in 2017, Almost Fringe Festival has grown 10% and interest is high for 2019 event.
- **Work with the Festival Committee to brainstorm ideas for working with partners to create new and exciting festival events that will attract VMC's target audience of Millennials and Gen-Xers.**
Pinot Fest is moving to Camp Navarro this year. One of the main purposes of moving the event from a winery was to attract a younger demographic since this venue offers more potential for an 'experiential' festival than has previously been available. Additionally, in March, the Festival Committee and Interim E.D. approved two grant funds that are supporting events geared to Millennials and Gen-Xers.

Operations & Admin

- **Maintain a visitor center that serves the public by providing information, brochures, and assistance, as well as an art exhibit space.**
The **Fort Bragg office remains open** as a visitor center.
- **The office will continue to be open on Saturdays from Memorial Day to Labor Day to provide visitor services; staff will also continue to hold First Fridays events in conjunction with other galleries and businesses in the downtown area to strengthen community relations.**
The FB office is now closed on Saturdays and will reopen Memorial Day weekend 2018, depending on staffing. The **office opened on Saturday March 17** for the Fort Bragg Whale Festival hosting Lazy Creek Vineyards.

- **Review and continue to enhance operational strategies such as telephone systems, conference calls and locations, file sharing, database development, back-up systems.**

The **Marketing and Communications Coordinator worked with a local Filemaker expert to create a resource database** for internal use. Staff and contractors will use the database to record Contacts, Businesses, Festival participation, Media Visits and results of those visits, and Sales. The status of other items is unknown.

- **Train all staff on website usage and best practices.**

Concurrent with the launch of the new VMC website, **all staff and contractors will be trained on back-end functionality** so each person on the VMC team is able to use the site to add events and other limited functions. Staff will each be assigned a user role concomitant with their responsibilities. VMC will instigate a system whereby every site entry will require two sets of eyes to ensure consistency of voice, accuracy, and ensure that information is visitor-facing.

- **Attend key travel industry conferences to provide access to industry trends and successful examples of best practices, furthering internal knowledge and benefiting the VMC program of work.**

Key industry events tend to be scheduled in spring/summer. VMC will attend those that most fit our mission such as **Cal Travel Summit (June 2018)** and **Visit California Outlook Forum**. VW attended DMA West Tech Summit.

- **Maintain accreditation from the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program, offered by Destination Marketing Association International.**

DMAI certification is **currently active until July 2018**.

Glossary of Terms

This glossary is included to explain terms used in this plan and in other reports and documents issued by Visit Mendocino County. While staff and contractors are familiar with the terminology, some of the terms need a brief explanation.

Advertising equivalency	This dollar figure represents the amount of money it would take to purchase the equivalent in advertising space in a print publication or digital equivalent. The VMC PR team uses a 1:1 ratio unlike many PR firms who use a multiplier to boost numbers.
Impressions	The number of views a print or digital article is estimated to reach based on circulation and subscription data.
Media Placement	A story (print or digital) about an aspect of Mendocino County that arises from PR efforts.
Media Mission	A trip by the PR team to a particular market, e.g., Vancouver BC, to meet local journalists and writers and inspire visitation to and coverage of Mendocino County.
Releases	This can either refer to a press release or a “hot sheet,” which is distributed to the press and highlights new and upcoming businesses and openings in the county.
FAM	Familiarization tour or trip. Media FAMs involve members of the media who are vetted by the PR team prior to a visit. Sales FAMs apply to tour group operators who are visiting the county with the aim of including Mendocino in tour packages.
Millennials	The segment of the population born between the early and the mid-1990s to early 2000s. Also known as Generation Y, they are the children of baby boomers and older Gen Xers.
Gen-Xers	The population segment born between the early-to-mid 1960s and ending birth years ranging from the late 1970s to early 1980s. Children of the Baby Boomers.
Baby Boomers	Those born between the early-to-mid 1940s up to about 1964.
Content marketing	Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience — and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.
Google Analytics	A reporting tool provided by Google that can be used to analyze traffic, ad words, digital marketing campaigns, demographics, etc. for VisitMendocino.com.
Facebook Insights	A reporting tool for analyzing traffic, advertising campaigns, and other activities on Facebook.
Activity Provider	A person located in a tourist destination who provides a unique, local activity for a visitor to do while on vacation. Examples of such activities include kayaking, bike riding or arts and crafts, among others.
Free Independent Traveler (FIT)	A person or a couple that is not traveling with a group; usually references foreign travelers out on their own (Foreign Independent Traveler).
Inbound Tour Operator	Someone specializing in providing tours to overseas travelers to a destination, either operating the tour themselves or working through established partnerships with local suppliers.
Receptives	In effect, “middle men” between tour operators and hotel/lodging owners, chiefly in overseas markets. Receptives obtain contracts with hotels for booking arrangements and offer these to tour operators looking to satisfy tourist demand.

Search Engine Marketing	A marketing tactic using paid advertising services so that interested clients and customers can reach a business quicker and easier while searching online.
Block	A number of rooms, seats, or spaces reserved in advance, usually by wholesalers, tour operators, or receptive operators who intend to sell them as components of tour packages.
Conversion	Getting “heads in beds” or otherwise closing the sale. Differs from “hospitality.” Hospitality is being warm, friendly and helpful. Conversion is active selling.
Demand generators	Strategies and programs developed by DMOs and suppliers to generate destination demand. Examples include festivals, events, cultural tours, and consumer promotion.
Engagement	On Facebook (and other social media platforms), engagement is when people perform actions on your Page. They may like a post, click on a link, or comment on an image for example. With Facebook Insights, engagement is measured as the number of times a post is clicked, liked, shared, or commented on.
Reach	A measure of the range of influence of any content; it is the measurement of how content is spread across various social media channels. Think of it as the number of eyeballs a piece of content is getting. On Facebook, for example, “total reach” is the number of people that have seen a particular post.
Selected Key Industry Associations	
DMA West	Destination Marketing Associations West, a membership organization of visitor bureaus throughout the western United States.
Visit California	The tourism marketing agency for the state.
California Travel Association	Membership organization offering education and advocacy for state tourism operators.
U.S. Travel Association	National, non-profit organization representing and advocating for all components of the travel industry.
Destination International	Global association of travel industry agencies and groups, offering education and advocacy for members. Visit Mendocino holds a certification from the globally recognized Destination Marketing Accreditation Program (DMAP); this serves as a visible industry distinction that defines quality and performance standards in destination marketing and management.
Brand USA	Agency chiefly responsible for marketing the USA as a destination to the rest of the world.