Twenty Two Ways to Use Your Membership

Membership in the Spokane Regional Convention and Visitors Bureau is a valuable tool for marketing your business. Like any tool though, it must be ***used*** to be effective. Take the time to review this list and consider what you can begin doing today to get the most from your membership in the CVB.

1. Read and respond to your faxes and mail from the CVB. Log on for notifications of newly posted leads and updates to the convention calendar. Each month you may receive several mailings/emails with important information. While some pieces are informational, others will require you to respond by phone or in writing. Leads coming from the Convention Sales, Convention Services, or Destination Marketing departments often require an immediate response. Specific instructions and special requests will be included in the lead, and a prompt response can make a difference in your company getting the business or not. If you are unable to handle a client's business, sending a letter of apology asking them to consider your company for their future needs may help bring you business at a later date.

2. Develop an information packet for your business that will allow you to respond to leads quickly and professionally. Consider including a welcome letter with an offer of your services, brochures, and referrals from satisfied customers.

3. Keep the CVB up-to-date. Whenever there is a change in your address, phone, business name, or individual contacts, let the CVB know so mail and email can be routed to the correct person without delay. It is also important to inform us of developments and changes in your business so we can share your new information with our staff, clients, and other members and, when appropriate, the press, tour operators and meeting planners.

4. Keep your listing information current. In addition to letting the CVB know about organizational and staff changes, make sure the descriptive text we have for your company remains accurate. It only takes a moment to contact the CVB when changes occur so your presence on the CVB Web site is always current. Additionally, be sure to review and promptly respond to the listing update request you will receive prior to the production of the CVB's Partner Services Directory and the Spokane Regional Visitors Guide.

5. Use the CVB's publications. The CVB produces a number of outstanding publications for you to use in your marketing efforts. The Spokane Regional Visitors Guide is an excellent publication to offer visiting clients, and guests from outside the area. It also serves as an excellent recruiting tool, helping you showcase the region for potential employees and their families. The Partner Services Directory is a valuable resource for clients planning meetings and events throughout the Spokane region. For complimentary copies of both publications, contact Business Development Services Manager Brooklyn Branson at 742-9382.

6. Take advantage of opportunities to market to fellow members. Mailing labels are available for the entire CVB membership or just a specific category of businesses for a nominal charge. Keeping members updated on the services you provide, new programs you offer and seasonal specials will encourage them to use your business.

7. Network with fellow CVB members. The CVB hosts regular member events, which provide a great opportunity to meet and mingle with like-minded industry professionals in an informal, social atmosphere. We encourage members to do business with each other and to work as a team to bring visitors to the Spokane region.

8. Build partnerships with other CVB members. Use your membership in the CVB to build positive reciprocal relationships with other CVB members. For example, hotels may want to develop an unwritten agreement with neighboring properties to refer overflow patrons. Retailers may recommend a nearby restaurant while the restaurant offers a discount to diners showing their receipt from the retailer.

9. Create a package with other CVB members. To attract more tourism business, you may wish to create a package that includes lodging, dining and admission to an area attraction or event. To gain more meeting and/or convention business, consider developing a package that includes meeting space, food and beverage service, audio/visual equipment and lodging. If you are a restaurant or retailer, why not partner with a transportation service to make it easy for convention delegates and hotel patrons to visit you? After your package is in place, be sure to let the CVB staff know what you are offering so they can help you promote it to the appropriate visitors and meeting planners. But don't stop there! Make up a flyer or rack card that can be displayed at all the partnering companies' businesses. Be sure everyone's *entire* staff is aware of the package and ready to recommend it. Then look into other ways to advertising your package. You may just find a whole new customer base!

10. Educate the CVB staff about the products and services you can provide. Take some time to consider the potential markets the CVB can help you access; meeting planners, convention delegates, tour groups, individual visitors, etc. Then determine how you would like to market your products and services to those groups. Once your ideas are in place, schedule a meeting with CVB staff from the appropriate department to bring them up to speed on what you have to offer. To schedule a presentation, please call Business Development Services Manager Brooklyn Branson at 742-9382.

11. Research meeting planner and tour operator needs. Take some time to learn the needs of meeting planners and tour operators, then determine how your product or service can best meet their needs. Visit with one of the CVB's Convention Services or Destination Marketing staff members to discuss marketing ideas. Borrow and review one of the many meeting planner or tour operator publications the CVB has on file or visit the Web sites for Meeting Professionals International (www.mpiweb.org), the International Society of Meeting Planners (www.iami.org), the National Tour Association (www.ntaonline.com), or the United States Tour Operators Association (www.ustoa.com) to gain insight into planners' concerns and challenges.

12. Offer a special welcome for special groups. Plan your promotional advertising, displays, staffing, and inventory with upcoming conventions and meetings in mind. You may want to put up a special welcome sign in your window or on a marquee to draw the attention of group members.

13. Restaurants: Make sure the CVB's Convention Services department has your current menu. Menus are included in the Restaurant Information Book, which is made available for delegates to review at the CVB's manned information booth, which is set up at dozens of conventions each year. Each member restaurant may provide up to two letter-size pages for the book. Use this opportunity to provide menu samples, photos and pertinent information to convention delegates. Please mail new or updated pages to Amy Cabe at the CVB's administrative office at 801 W. Riverside Ave, Suite 301, Spokane, WA 99201.

14. Support the convention groups coming to the Spokane region and invite their delegates to visit your business by advertising in their meeting programs. You can also show your support by offering to sponsor a specific event or a service (such as a coffee station) at the convention.

15. Offer special hours or a special menu to accommodate groups. Companies that are exhibiting at a trade show may want to host group dinners or outings during the show's "off" hours. Consider how you might adjust your hours, delivery options, menu, etc. to accommodate a group's schedule.

16. Remember the value of tourism marketing. The CVB's Destination Marketing staff attends trade shows and travels extensively to promote the Spokane region as a destination for group tours and leisure travel. After each trade show, lead information from the show is sent to interested CVB members. You can use this information to first research which groups have an interest in your product or service and then to contact them with pertinent information.

17. Make your services available to travel writers. Hundreds of travel writers from around the world contact the CVB for help planning their visit to the Spokane region. Working with them is a golden opportunity for our members to gain publicity by becoming part of the news stories, magazine articles, and television programs they produce. If you're interested in hosting travel writers please contact Communications Manager Pam Scott at 742-9373.

18. Provide the CVB with an ample supply of your brochures. The CVB distributes brochures and staff and volunteers answer many questions at our Visitor Information Centers. Some materials are also taken to the trade shows our staff attends. Call Travel Counselor Karen Montague at 747-3230 to check our supply of your materials. If our staff contacts you to request additional promotional pieces, please respond quickly.

19. Invite the staff and volunteers who run our Visitor Information Centers to your business for a site tour. They meet and greet thousands of visitors to the Spokane region each year and are often asked specific questions about dining, accommodations, activities, etc. If they understand and have experienced your services, they will be better able to answer questions and confidently refer your business to visitors. For scheduling information, call Director of Visitor Services Gina Mauro at 747-3230.

20. Encourage colleagues and businesses you patronize to join the CVB. A large, active membership helps the CVB to attract more conventions and visitors to the Spokane Region. The more diverse our membership, the more exposure all our member companies receive.

21. Participate in the CVB's free promotional opportunities. Each year the Destination Marketing Department produces both winter and summer season promotions backed by substantial advertising campaigns. When you participate, you reap the benefits of multimedia marketing clout that includes television, radio and internet components. To find out the ways you can best participate and benefit, contact the CVB's Destination Marketing staff.

22. Bring home the business! Did you know that you might be the most persuasive tool to bring a convention or meeting to Spokane? It's true. Winning bids for conventions and meetings is an exceptionally competitive business. Often it is the local member of an organization who wields the greatest power with their association's decision makers. If you've attended a meeting or convention outside of Spokane recently, contact CVB Vice President and Director of Convention Sales, Keith Backsen at kbacksen@visitspokane.com.

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