

# GROUP TOUR TRENDS AND TIPS

## Profile Sheets



Your profile sheet is an important tool when seeking group business. Not only can these profile sheets “sell” your group experience, but they can also be helpful references for tour operators after they’ve booked your business. Here are a few simple reminders, plus tips we’ve discovered when interviewing some 2014 Heartland Travel Showcase tour operators.

It’s important that your profile sheet stands apart from the crowd, which can be difficult when you’re talking about an 8.5- by 11-inch paper, printed front and back. **Highlight what makes you unique. Show that you can accommodate groups. Let them know that you’ll go above the norm in providing service to group travelers.** Additional details can be sent as follow-up, because group business is all about building relationships and trust. You must reach out to operators throughout the year to get the most business from these contacts.

More and more tour operators are targeting special groups of clients and niche markets. **Think about creating a profile sheet for each of these opportunities.** What attracts a traditional tour is not the same as what attracts a student tour. Do your homework to identify the types of groups an operator is booking before you meet with them.

**Remember the lead time needed by a group tour operator** to book your business, then turn around and sell it to his or her clients. That means you should include dates of operation and events not only for 2014, but for 2015 and beyond. Both U.S. Tour Operators Association<sup>1</sup> and *Group Tour Magazine*<sup>2</sup> report that more than 62% of group tours are booked six to 12 months in advance. Additionally, *Group Tour Magazine* reports 17% of tours are booked more than a year in advance.<sup>3</sup>



## Profile Sheet Checklist

We went straight to the source and asked tour operators attending the 2014 Heartland Travel Showcase what they look for when using profile sheets.

### Eye-catching and focused on the group experience

- ☐ Keep it simple and graphically appealing
- ☐ Leave at least a 1-inch left margin
- ☐ Three-hole punch your profile sheets
- ☐ Use bullets or short, punchy paragraphs

### Compelling and relevant description of your group tour experience

- ☐ Use language tour operators can use to sell your experience to clients
- ☐ Think about the group experience, and target your copy to this audience
- ☐ Show them that you understand group needs
- ☐ Days, dates and hours of operation
- ☐ Suggested length of time for groups to visit

<sup>1</sup> United States Tour Operators Association, “2014 Annual Member Survey,” December 2013

<sup>2</sup> *Group Tour Magazine*, “Readers’ Survey Results: A Snapshot of the Group Tour Industry Today,” August 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

### **Identify unique group-only activities**

- ☐ Behind-the-scenes opportunities
- ☐ Special incentives or “bus-friendly” services and amenities
- ☐ Hands-on experiences

### **Group tour policies**

- ☐ Comp policy
- ☐ Incentive booking programs

### **Photographs**

- ☐ Make sure images are at least 300 dpi
- ☐ Caption your photographs to entice them to learn more and to identify where they were taken

### **Group pricing**

- ☐ Minimum group requirements
- ☐ Cancellation policy
- ☐ Seasonal price adjustments
- ☐ Deposit rules

### **Contact information**

- ☐ Name of your group sales liaison, email, direct telephone, address, fax, etc.)
- ☐ Make sure this individual is the person who consistently works with groups

### **Itinerary suggestions**

- ☐ Suggested itineraries
- ☐ Seasonal itineraries
- ☐ Start with your “wow” itinerary!

### **Assistance and ideas for building a complete tour**

- ☐ Include regional information on attractions, shopping, lodging and restaurants
- ☐ Remember, operators are planning a complete group experience, so make it easy for them to create a full tour or add your site to an existing visit

### **Map**

- ☐ Show the location of your hotel/venue/event
- ☐ If your site is located near a popular site, provide an estimated driving time
- ☐ Be sure to show where you are located within a state or region
- ☐ Include major interstates if possible
- ☐ Also helpful is descriptive language that can help place your site. For example, say “We are located 20 miles east of Pittsburgh along I-80.”

### **Parking details**

- ☐ Parking price (if applicable)
- ☐ Unloading information for coaches