

Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Putting Power in the People's Pockets

Statistics is a powerful tool to build support for the travel and tourism industry, but Visit Eau Claire took it one step further by placing the power of numbers directly into the hands of its supporters. Recognizing the difficulty of committing numbers to memory, Visit Eau Claire embedded a pen with a pull-out infographic touting the positive economic impact of travel to Eau Claire, Wisconsin. This empowered their coalition to speak often and more confidently on the industry's behalf.



While members can access statistics and reports through the DMO's member extranet, Visit Eau Claire needed something more portable to help spread the word on travel and tourism.

Answering to One's Existence
Visit Eau Claire has maintained as a strategic goal, informing and educating the community and elected leaders on the importance of the tourism industry and the DMO's role in developing the economy via tourism development.

A "relevancy strategy" was established and included a local marketing component, as well as a local advocacy component. The organization determined that it must be able to answer the question, "If Visit Eau Claire no longer existed, who would care and why?"

Applying that mentality to their everyday work spurred the DMO to share report and statistics about the impact of travel and tourism, and about the role Visit Eau Claire plays, both online and off.

Empowering Supporters to Speak

While Visit Eau Claire consistently supplied information in support of travel and tourism in the area, the DMO discovered that even their own supporters found the huge amount of data to be overwhelming. Therefore, Visit Eau Claire set out to make it easy – and fun – for community leaders to talk



about the impact and importance of the tourism industry. To do so, the DMO needed to accomplish two primary goals:

1. Synthesize their information into a few key facts and talking points.
2. Get it into the hands of the people who were well positioned to share the DMO or Eau Claire tourism story.

Enter the Advocacy Pen

For only \$1.19 a pen, Visit Eau Claire began to arm their supporters with an “Advocacy Pen” that summarizes how travel and tourism contributed to the local economy in terms of taxes, spending, and wages or salaries.

It also targets the five largest segments impacted by travel and tourism, thereby giving the owner a clear list of the industry’s most significant stakeholders.

“We know our stakeholders and leaders want to share the impact of tourism, but they just need the ‘cheat sheet’ to help them out,” said Linda John, Executive Director of Visit Eau Claire.

The DMO therefore distributes the pens at every committee meeting, community presentation, and budget meeting.

Though they may seem like a small gesture, these pens have created a buzz amongst Visit Eau Claire board members and community stakeholders, because they have combined functional, educational and portable qualities into a single medium.

“Best of all,” continues John, “the important facts are easily at the fingertips of the people who need to be passing along the important message of the power of tourism in Eau Claire. It works.” •

The “Advocacy Pen” easily puts important facts and figures directly into the hands of those who can share the story of tourism in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.



Photo Credit: Bill Geist

Words from a DMO Advocate

Linda John Executive Director Visit Eau Claire

Share a personal story about the impact of travel and tourism in Eau Claire.

One of my early lessons about the impact of travel and tourism was the result of a failed bid in 2001 when “little Eau Claire, Wisconsin” became one of four national finalists selected to host the ESPN Great Outdoor Games.

We put everything we had into our bid, and though we were disappointed when the event was not awarded to us, the relationships we had established along the way, both on the client side and community side, turned out to be the true victory of that experience.

Since the ESPN Great Outdoor Games included multiple events, we were able to secure individual event games throughout the years. Even now, thirteen years after that “lost bid” experience, we hosted the first ever Winter Logrolling event as part of our Special Olympics Polar Plunge, and it was a huge success.

This early lesson taught me many things about the power of travel and tourism and the magnitude of opportunities it offers.

Do you have any advice for other DMOs on the topic of advocacy?



The support of DMOs by the local business community and elected officials is more important than ever in the history of our industry. Competition for visitors' attention and their disposable income is fierce. DMOs now, more than ever, need to prove their impact on the economy, and demonstrate their relevance in growing the local economy through tourism marketing. It's not impossible.

As local DMOs we are, after all, the best suited to provide the best information and experiences to our visitors. We must never, however, take this competitive advantage for granted. •



As the Executive Director of Visit Eau Claire and the Visit Eau Claire Sports Commission, Linda John is responsible for the overall destination marketing and management of the Eau Claire region of west-central Wisconsin. She has held this position since 1993.

Some of John's top accomplishments at Visit Eau Claire include the development of a successful regional tourism program, creation of a sports commission for the Eau Claire area and most recently, the launching of a successful mobile visitor center program called “The Fun Patrol.”

John has served as a Past Board Chair of the Wisconsin Association of Convention and Visitors Bureaus, and served on the Wisconsin Governor's Council on Tourism. She is the past Chair for the Wisconsin Sports Marketing Committee and member of the State of Wisconsin Marketing Committee.

John holds a degree in Business Administration/Finance from Minnesota State University in Mankato.

NATIONAL TRAVEL & TOURISM WEEK



MAY 3-11, 2014

U.S. TRAVEL
ASSOCIATION



The first full week of May is annually recognized as National Travel and Tourism Week. The U.S. travel community has collectively marked the event in a number of creative ways, from staging local rallies and conducting media outreach to securing proclamations and resolutions from local legislative bodies. Each year, localized events are presented in cities, states and travel businesses nationwide to champion the power of travel.

Learn more here: <http://www.ustravel.org/marketing/national-travel-and-tourism-week>

Keep up with stories from the DMAI's series "Travel & Tourism Advocacy in Action" throughout National Travel and Tourism Week. You can find all case studies on our blog at <http://www.destinationmarketing.org/blog>.

Help get your advocacy projects and strategy off the ground when you join us for our complimentary webinar:

"Building Better Stakeholder Relationships"
May 20 at 1:30 PM EDT

[Learn more and register here.](#)