

Hotel Management
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The Sales Clinic
By: Howard Feiertag

MILITARY REUNIONS – AN UNTAPPED MARKET FOR BUSINESS WHEN YOU NEED IT

Here is a very valuable market for some properties that could use group business during a down time. This is somewhat of a hidden source of group business not known, or even recognized by sales departments of hotels. It just doesn't fall into any specific market that we usually go after for business. It is not corporate, government, social, associations, unions; it just doesn't fall into some kind of general category that we seek when looking to go after groups.

However, interestingly enough, some convention bureaus around the country have been familiar with this very big market, and have sought to go after this business for the properties in their area. Convention Bureaus within areas like Branson, MO; Southern, NV; Fort Worth, TX; Washington, DC; Nashville, TN; Bowling Green, KY; Providence, RI; Newport News, VA; Galveston, TX; Jacksonville, FL., have all realized how important the Military Reunion market could be to their members and areas.

Each of these Convention Bureau have organized a ConFAM, which is an all expense paid multi-day event, combining a Reunion Conference and a FAMiliarization tour of the area. The bureaus have arranged for rooms at local properties, meals, admissions at attractions, and local transportation. Instructors for workshops and instructional materials are furnished by the Reunion Friendly Network (RFN). Local attractions and properties have the opportunity to exhibit at these events and network with the attendees who are all military veterans who are planners of meetings for the various military branches of service represented at the event. Those attending only pay for their own transportation to and from the event, and personal purchases. Although the ConFAM last only three days, these veterans who attend, with their families usually make a week-long vacation out of this trip, and stay around, visiting that area of the country.

Organizing and putting on such an event is not an easy task. It takes locating those volunteer veteran meeting planners, and the various veteran groups around the country, to create an appropriate listing of those who plans these reunions. Then, of course, communicating with them through various means, as well as with Convention Bureaus to get them to assist in making appropriate arrangements for the events. This is all done by RFN, located in Hollywood, FL. An organization founded by veteran Paul Spiewak in 1991 who saw the need for military reunion planners to have a source for information and training. RFN now has a database of over 8,000 planners of reunions. They have trained more than 6,000 reunion planners at 200 educational conferences and FAMs conducted in cooperation with CVBs in 38 different states. RFN, since 1992 has published a quarterly magazine which is distributed free to all of the volunteer military reunion planners, as well as RFN member CVBs, hotels, and reunion vendors. The publication is also available on line. There is also an on-line publication called Reunion Planner Memos which is a monthly newsletter for military reunion planners.

Paul Spiewak has written a couple of books on this market; however, the one that would appeal to hotel operators and sales personnel is the one that he has on a CD version which is called: Reunion Business: What It Is & How To Get IT. For more information on RFN and what is going on in that group market for hotels contact Paul Spiewak at: paul@reunionfriendly.com or 800-225-5044

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