



**MISSISSIPPI RIVER COUNTRY (MRC)**

**MARCH 16, 2010 10AM CST**

**BOARD CONFERENCE CALL NOTES**

Attendees: MN, IA, IL, MO, KY, MS, AR, LA, National Office (NO)  
Meeting called to order at 10:03am.

**A. APPROVED NEW STRATEGIC PLAN**

- i. Motion to approve three-year strategic plan (FY11-13) with a review of plan to be made FY12 by Minnesota. Second by Illinois. Motion carried.

**B. JAPAN MARKETING**

**i. UPDATE FROM 3-11-10 MEETING BETWEEN NATIONAL OFFICE (NO)  
AND ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL (AI)**

1. Advanced International is in the process of being sold to Connect Worldwide, located in Scottsdale AZ. NO will receive a new contract for review.
2. Recommendation to focus our message (e-newsletters, travel itineraries, website content, packaged travel and FAM itineraries) on four experiential travel areas: green travel (including natural resources), music, food and nostalgia/Americana. Recommendation from the Board to develop message through Working Group, particularly language associated with “green” travel
3. AI recommends redesign on Japanese website. Redesign to incorporate social media, video and other interactive features. NO will provide new copy as well as new itineraries on the four focus areas.
4. AI provided two options to train travel agents—Travel Journal’s on-line training program or two face-to-face seminars. Travel Journal’s (largest travel trade publication) on-line training program is new with only a few destinations using it (Hawaii and Nevada). Average views approximately 100 per destination. Face-to-face seminars in Tokyo (2) with estimated attendance of 50-70 participants per seminar could also serve as pay-to-play for states interested in sending a representative to the seminar. Illinois has done on-line training seminars and recommends



in-person training when available. Board recommended face-to-face seminars.

5. AI believes we can increase tour operator product by 10% if we focus on website content. Many tour organizations are eliminating or reducing printed package pieces. Focus needs to be on senior-based travel which is healthier. NO will coordinate Working Group to focus on four themes and experiential opportunities for packaged-travel purchase with seniors.
6. Revamping MRC's Japanese printed piece should be considered for FY12 budget
7. Many tour and receptive operators unable to travel due to staffing cutbacks but invitations will be made to qualified and targeted operators.
8. Social media efforts will be established in Japan and lead by NO with updates based on the four focus themes and events. Updates translated in Japanese and posted in Japan.
9. Advertising on blogs will be provided as an option; however, cost may be prohibitive outside of Link USA which MRC already advertises. Other options include Globetrotter, 4travel, TripAdvisor and Yahoo Travel.
10. Need new material for distribution at JATA, including travel items that are translated into Japanese, state guides, city guides, especially maps of the state and major cities and giveaways—a minimum of 100 per state. NO will work with Working Group to get these materials to Japan.
11. Consider a pay-to-play material distribution policy for JATA to allow communities and attractions within the states to offer materials in the booth (a policy used by other destinations who attend JATA). Board recommends developing this policy through the Working Group.

**ii. FY11 Budget discussion**

1. Estimated budget for website redesign is \$5500. Board asked NO to provide information on the contractor for the website design project. Adding social media updates to the Japan website has additional fees, however, with NO creating posts, fees should be reduced



2. Estimated cost for Travel Journal's on-line training program is \$27,000 and two face-to-face seminars in Tokyo is estimated at \$20,000.
  3. With \$20,000 budgeted in FY10 for the two media FAMs, it may not be possible to do both the travel agent training program and media FAMS in FY11. Board recommended prioritizing media FAMs for FY11.
  4. Recommendation from NO to combine line item for tour operator/receptive operator US travel expenses with media travel expenses and allow the Board to select opportunities that yield most results
  5. YouTube video translation is available to add videos to Japanese site. Estimated cost is \$1700 for three videos.
  6. Estimated cost for JATA is \$9050 with the regular sized booth and includes furniture, electricity, B-to-B happy hour and media marketplace. NO to determine who is attending as a larger booth may be necessary
  7. The above items will be considered and prioritized by Working Group with a budget available for review in May. June Board call will focus on approving the FY11 budget.
- iii.** Spring Southern Media FAM tour
1. AI recommends mid-May to early-June
  2. NO to confirm participating states based on FY10 paid dues so itinerary planning can begin and media contacted
  3. Board recommends avoiding the week of Pow-Wow in selecting dates
- C.** Upcoming Meeting Dates Reviewed
- i.** June 15, 2010
  - ii.** September 14, 2010
  - iii.** December 14, 2010
  - iv.** All 10am CST call times
- D.** Other Business
- i.** MN requested that a financial report be added to the agenda of all future Board meetings. NO agreed.

Meeting adjourned at 10:54am.