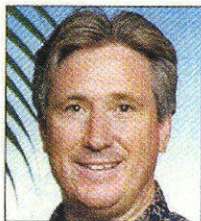


21st Century Group exec chats about market

Travel Weekly Hawaii bureau chief Doug Oakley talked with Alex Doyle, vice president of national accounts for the 21st Century Group of Kihei about the trends in the Hawaii meetings market and the mission of his firm.

The company offers a one-call service for meetings and conventions in Hawaii as well as other meetings planning services.



Doyle

Travel Weekly: What exactly does your company do for the travel agent or meeting planner?

Doyle: We are a hotel sales and marketing company in our sixth year with 11 employees.

We serve the needs of the meetings and incentive markets by representing the major meetings facilities in Hawaii. We have a pretty sophisticated data

base of clients on both the hotel and meeting planners side.

We're almost like a private visitors bureau. In fact, we have a separate division that manages the Maui Visitors Bureau convention business. So if you call the bureau for information on holding a convention, you're actually talking to us.

TW: What are the latest trends in the meetings and convention market here that travel agents and meetings planners should know about?

Doyle: What they probably want to understand is that the market has grown here tremendously. There are still value seasons, but they are shrinking. Usually the demand season for meetings is the first quarter and the fourth quarter

through the first part of December. But this year, it has kept up all year long. As for the future, that remains to be seen. This year the market has been so strong. Some of the major luxury hotels are averaging 92% occupancy. And if people are used to 70% occupancy at a certain hotel, it's now 80%.

Another new trend is the emergence of Outrigger as a player in the meetings market with their Kona property [the new Outrigger Waikoloa Beach on the Big Island] and the new one here in Maui [the Outrigger Wailea Resort].

People also should know that all the outer islands all have non-stop air service now from the mainland. That has had a strong impact on meetings here.

TW: Do you find you are competing with the hotels' own sales staffs when you are selling meetings space?

Doyle: We actually complement the hotels' sales forces. We help them find business. Say there's a customer interested in a meeting in Hawaii

and wants to be in a certain hotel, but doesn't know anyone there. Well, we do know someone at that hotel and we introduce the two.

TW: What is the size of the meetings market in Hawaii at the hotels, not including the new convention center in Honolulu?

Doyle: There are about 40 hotels that participate in the meetings market and they probably average about \$10 million to \$15 million a year in revenue, so that's about a \$600 million market.

TW: You mentioned you have a separate division that is contracted with the Maui

Visitors Bureau. Is there anything else you are involved in?

Doyle: Besides finding people meetings space, we have a meetings cancellation service called Cancellation Recovery Service. I call it the cancellation doctor.

As an example, we had an associations management firm call us in May saying they had to cancel a big meeting in Hawaii set for September, and

they asked us to help. They had blocked a bunch of hotel rooms they didn't need now and were facing a \$175,000 cancellation fee. So we sent a message out to the folks in our database saying, "we have a special deal on a block of rooms."

Someone bought those rooms and the association didn't have to pay any of the fee. Sometimes a hotel will call us and tell us they had a cancellation for next month and ask can we find someone to fill those rooms? We tell them, if you want to sell those rooms, here's what the market is willing to pay right now.

AT A GLANCE

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