

## Christine Duffy Presentation

April 6, 2009

The FICP board meeting was held at the lovely Hyatt Regency Bonita Springs. As a member of the Hospitality Committee I was invited to attend the board meeting and a special session delivered by Ms. Christine Duffy, President and CEO of Maritz Travel Company. Christine spoke candidly to us about the current challenges in the meeting and incentive business and gave us an update regarding the newly formed U.S. Travel Association. This organization is the merger of the former Travel Business Roundtable and Travel Industry Association and brings together industry leaders from companies in the hospitality, travel, tourism and meeting planning sectors.

Christine shared with us some of the background on the travel industry in general terms stating that we have historically been a very fragmented industry with numerous organizations and associations representing these diverse travel market segments. While this may have been effective in the past, once our industry was faced with such negative publicity and media coverage regarding meetings and incentive travel, it became apparent that we needed a strong and unified voice in Washington, D.C. Christine also shared how challenging it has been to pull many diverse hospitality and travel leaders together to focus on a strategic plan with an effective marketing, communication, research and lobbying efforts. [http://www.tia.org/pressmedia/current\\_news.html](http://www.tia.org/pressmedia/current_news.html)

Several key decisions and initiatives have already been spearheaded by this new organization. They agreed that in order to successfully represent our industry, they need data. It was decided that an Economic Impact Study should be conducted, however many of the details regarding who would be commissioned to spearhead this, and how it would get paid for remain undefined. A second key initiative is the Meetings Mean Business campaign which many of us have participated in by sending emails, and letters to our congressman and senators. Another exciting element to this campaign includes the Faces of Travel contest which has been launched to find real people around the U.S. who are impacted by the meetings business.

<http://www.meetingsmeanbusiness.com/facesoftravel>

The third key initiative that is being pursued is the establishment of clear guidelines for the meeting/incentive industry which can be presented to Washington decision makers and provided to corporations who are looking for ways to conduct business without crossing the line of ethics when holding a meeting. Christine pointed to the pharmaceutical meetings sector as a good model for the insurance industry and others as a possible model for the future. Maritz Travel along with other key companies in the business are working together to draft these guidelines in the immediate future.

Christine's talk was upbeat and energetic and she made a call for action to all of us in the room to get and stay involved in the campaign to support the meetings and incentives industry. Our efforts with our congressman and senators have already paid off and will continue to have an impact as our voice grows louder and stronger in Washington D.C.

We must be leaders in our companies, our communities and in our states to speak out about the industry that we love, and has made us who we are today.

I am thankful to the board for inviting me and the HP Committee to experience this informative and inspiring session and look forward to making an impact in my state!

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