

Stephanie Brown: LOOKING AHEAD TOGETHER: 2009 INITIATIVES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

SLIDE 2

At the end of 2007, a comprehensive brand study was conducted to identify a brand position for Alexandria that is **AUTHENTIC, MOTIVATES TRAVEL, and DISTINGUISHES** Alexandria from its competition.

The decade-old slogan, the Fun Side of the Potomac, was retired and we got to work to articulate a sophisticated new brand position that highlights Alexandria's historic ambiance and contemporary flair.

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This logo – loved by many – not loved by some, was replaced in January of this year with....

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... this logo designed by Alexandria-based Abrials & Partners. It was developed on a meager budget, guided by the ACVA Board with input from many stakeholders.

SLIDE 5

The new logo and creative design articulates the sophisticated appeal of Alexandria.

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In November, an all new destination website – VisitAlexandriaVA.com – was launched. The dramatic design of the site is complemented by significantly enhanced tools that improve both the user experience and selling opportunities. The site features an interactive history timeline and neighborhood portals that allow users to browse shops, restaurants, hotels, attractions and events for specific areas of the City.

Members can now create an entire page featuring a photo gallery, special offers, and individual calendars. The site is driven by a powerful CMS – content management system – that enables us to dynamically enhance the content without programming charges – and all of our members can log on to keep their pages current.

The website is now linked to our membership and sales databases – and the calendar of events database already includes more than 500 events.

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The Travelocity booking engine on VisitAlexandriaVA.com continues to rank in the top 20 destinations in the Travelocity system, with reservations totaling \$100,000 in FY 2009.

The ACVA earned a partner commission of more than \$6,000 in our first year.

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In April, online restaurant reservations were added through Alexandria-based Fishbowl Marketing, the trusted leader in permission-based online marketing for the restaurant industry. VisitAlexandriaVA.com is the first destination site in the country to integrate dining technology.

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The system allows diners to find an available table in the City. And, the restaurant can add the booking widget to their own site, making this powerful online reservation system easy and affordable for ACVA member restaurants.

SLIDE 10

During Fiscal Year 2009, the website attracted more than 500,000 visits and 2.4 million page views. The bounce rate improved 11 percent and the average time users spent on the site increased 23 percent.

In the coming year, our focus will be on Search Engine Optimization and enhanced analytical tools to inform our online advertising strategies and drive even more visitation to the site.

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The Inauguration of Barack Obama drew an estimated audience of 1.8 million to the nation's capital in January.

Realizing that hotel rooms would probably fill without special promotions, our strategy was to capitalize on media exposure by highlighting special events and dining.

Mayor Euille spearheaded private support to simulcast the swearing-in ceremony on a JumboTron at Market Square. The event put Alexandria on the publicity map and attracted an audience of 1,400.

The Potomac Riverboat Company worked their magic with the Coast Guard, and offered Water Taxi service from Alexandria to DC – opening a promotional window that resulted in media coverage on CNN and every local television station. Five stories appeared in the Washington Post, which proclaimed, “Alexandria rocked!”

The ACVA Team distributed 10,000 of the flyer shown here to our hotels for distribution to guests at check in.

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The focus of our promotional efforts was Alexandria’s Inaugural Restaurant Week. 30 restaurants offered “Choice of Presidents” menus that were showcased on a promotional micro website. The result of these efforts included a 55 percent increase in website visits, with 4,000 visits to our inauguration website and 11,000 to the Restaurant Week site.

Total hotel room revenue in the City increased 30 percent to nearly \$13 million during January.

The second annual Alexandria Restaurant Week will return January 15 – 24, 2010.

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The Summer of Historic Savings promotion introduced the new Key to the City Pass.

The Key to the City included FREE admission to nine historic sites and special offers from 50 participating shops, restaurants, and attractions.

Visitors received the passes for booking their hotel reservations on VisitAlexandriaVA.com. They were also packaged through several Alexandria hotels, and for sale at the Visitors Center. The Key to the City was our grassroots campaign to provide you with more promotional exposure to the City's overnight guests, and to highlight the City's historic assets – and it was absolutely free for members to participate.

Nearly 1,000 Passes were distributed to visitors over the summer.

A fall edition of the Key to the City includes admission to our historic sites, and 60 special offers with targeted distribution of 2,500 Passes.

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The ACVA sales team focused on the multi-year \$388 million investment by the Alexandria hotel industry, and launched their

2009 campaign, **“Alexandria: A Dazzling Destination, Close and Affordable”**. The destination campaign targeted meeting planners in the region with a rejuvenation theme.

A Personal Revitalization Package contest was promoted to tradeshow attendees, on the website and through direct mail – generating 29 leads and 11 definite bookings.

They introduced the “Puttin’ on the Glitz” client event in September – typifying what they do so well. 27 partners were organized to host 250 meeting planners at the Carlyle Club for an evening of cocktails and canapés along with messages, hair styling, make-up and even fortune telling!

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“Meet Alexandria” was developed in response to the sinking economy and the backlash against meetings and incentive travel in the fall of 2008.

Capitalizing on Alexandria’s status as the fourth largest market in the country for association headquarters, the ACVA sales team led a city-wide blitz targeting 213 associations, and held a networking-education breakfast that was attended by 28 planners.

A letter from Mayor Euille to CEOs based in Alexandria encouraged them to keep their events at home.

A referral program called, “Keep it in Alexandria” offered prizes to sales teams at Alexandria hotels and attractions to refer any

business they couldn't take back to the ACVA. This grassroots effort generated 32 leads and \$454,000 in estimated revenue. (Bob Scherk from the Lyceum was our big winner – referring 16 leads)

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The sales team participated in 10 tradeshow and hosted the popular Ice Cream Blitz.

These efforts, combined with...

ONLINE ADVERTISING...DIRECT MAIL... AND MORE THAN 32,000 contacts during the year, resulted in actualized revenue of \$2.5 million.

More than 1,200 leads valued at \$26 million were distributed to Alexandria businesses.

This productivity equaled 2008 despite unparalleled challenges. Congratulations Lorraine, Brian, and Elizabeth – and thank you for all of your hard work.

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In January, a re-organization was completed to create the Department of Public Affairs, headed by our long-time director of membership and master-of-all-trades Merrie Morris.

During 2009, membership grew to 312, surpassing the historic average of 250.

Our Public Affairs department of two people produced the Official Visitors Guide – with distribution of 400,000 and the Old Town Map with 300,000 copies in the market.

They also coordinated our first annual Membership Appreciated Week which welcomed 40 members businesses to our offices for website training and to learn about sales and marketing opportunities.

The Funside Forums were retooled to become Tourism Marketing Forums. Six programs were offered in addition to our popular Tourism Training Program that was presented to the Trolley drivers and concierges of Gaylord National. During FY 2009, Merrie and Emily's media outreach efforts resulted in coverage in publications that reached 54 million readers, with estimated value of \$1.2 million.

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The Alexandria Visitors Center at Ramsay House extended its hours to serve evening visitors. The popular evening hours fueled a 13 percent increase in visitation to total 78,000 in FY 09.

The lower level was enhanced to show the 20-minute promotional video that was developed for the Water Taxi, and a new line of merchandise was introduced to showcase the new Alexandria logo.

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At this meeting, last year, I presented the details of our new media strategy.

Effective advertising is as much about the strategy of the media plan as it is about the visual quality of the advertising itself. We are fortunate to have Foskey Phillips advertising agency on our team to guide that media strategy.

I am happy to report that their efforts on our behalf resulted in free advertising and enhanced value worth \$358,000. We were also successful at winning a cooperative marketing program with Metro, valued at \$134,000.

Together, these efforts increased the total value of our advertising budget by 50 percent.

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Building on the success of last year's campaign, we will again target three key segments with the campaign, "Shop, Dine and Celebrate on America's Historic Main Streets"

The ad you see here is the creative for our "Destination" campaign that targets affluent households within a five-hour drive radius.

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This campaign appears in lifestyle and culinary magazines to build awareness of Alexandria as a destination to motivate overnight stays.

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In 2008, City Council appropriated supplemental funding to the ACVA to initiate a comprehensive campaign targeting Alexandria's residents and neighbors to shop and dine in the City.

This year's Regional Campaign highlights the City's signature events and uses the Alexandria Originals to underscore the city's unique and independently owned businesses. The ads appear in regional magazines and newspapers, and can be heard on the radio waves in the Washington DC metro area.

The third segment of our 2010 advertising plan targets Tourists after they have arrived in Washington DC, Northern Virginia or National Harbor. We are continuing a heavy schedule in DC visitor publications and Where Magazine which we consider to be the best vehicle for reaching DC and National Harbor tourists.

Where Magazine offers Alexandria businesses discounted rates in the ACVA-sponsored section. **Rebecca Valinsky** is here today if you are interested in this opportunity.

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The 2010 marketing plan also includes a series of seasonal promotions.

The first is a Fall Campaign positioned as “The Artful Getaway”. The multi-faceted campaign is anchored by this six-panel brochure that was mailed to 90,000 households.

The budget for this campaign was supplemented by funds allocated for Economic Development priorities by City Council in response to a coordinated request for the City’s economic development partners, the AEDP, SBDC, and ACVA – to provide a stimulus to Alexandria’s tourism-related businesses.

The campaign highlights cultural activities in the City and uses the Key to the City Pass as a booking incentive. Of course, all of our traditional advertising and promotions are supported by online advertising.

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A brand new initiative joins the lineup in October. Following the success of Restaurant Week, our intrepid Marketing Director Anna Jones, wanted to develop a strategy to highlight shopping in Alexandria with a fresh new brand. Alexandria Boutique Week will debut October 10-18, featuring special offers at 50 retail locations.

Shoppers will collect stamps from 5 shops for a chance to win a night at the Morrison House and a \$1,000 shopping spree. 25,000 shopping guides will be inserted into the Alexandria Times and 10,000 will be available in stores. Online channels include Google, Bing, DC Scout, Daily Candy and

Washingtonian. I hope you will check out the details on the micro site AlexandriaBoutiqueWeek.com

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Boutique Week cross-promotes online restaurant reservations on VisitAlexandriaVA.com, and our new micro site DineAlexandriaVA.com

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The ACVA Annual Report is being distributed online this year to conserve resources, I hope you will read it online in the member section of our website, or we will happily provide you with a printed copy by request.

You have been very attentive during these information-packed presentations. I'd like to again thank Greg Leisch and Suzanne Cook for sharing their tremendously valuable expertise with us today. Thank you Councilman Smedberg for the exciting news you shared today, and to Mayor Euille and all of the City officials for your ongoing support of tourism in Alexandria. Before we adjourn, I'd like to ask Suzanne to draw the winners who will select the Visitor Center merchandise of their choice, sporting the new Alexandria logo.