

*Minnesota Resort and Campground Association
Comments from “Future of Minnesota Resorts” presentation by John Edman
Notes-Carol Altepeter
October 20, 2009*

What are your customers saying about the resort experience?

- People who commit for a weeks stay enjoy their vacation more than the shorter stays-more relaxed. It takes them several days to unwind.
- Some resorts have taken shorter stays, but find their guests don't get enough relaxation. They tend to book a week the next time.
- Some new guests are looking for 3-4 night packages trying to see what the resort experience is like. Many are last minutes and use quick searches to find options. They may not book the next year, as they want to try different experiences.
- There is a generation change in who is coming. Past generations, people went “up north” to the lake. Now they do different things especially when “grandpa and grandma” are not there anymore. They choose a completely different vacation option.
- Resorts were a family tradition that has changed; people have so many options for their vacation.
- On the positive side, some customers want to continue their vacation with “what they know”. These customers rebook each year, same cabin, and same time.
- Resorts need to know more about how to market to new customers.
- We need more summer marketing, can't rely on just marketing the shoulder seasons.
- Some customers are seeking out experiences to bring back childhood memories. They want to bring their families back to where they had fun as a child.

How was business this year?

- Best year they have had. Rebooking was good for next year.
- Season gets booked later.
- More short stays-but resort doesn't take reservations for shorter stays until after May 1.
- Campgrounds-customers book short stay to check out what you have, may stay longer if they have a good experience.
- Campgrounds have done well this year.
- For some it was a tough year.

Competition/Challenges

- How do we reverse the idea that it is Minnesota vs. the world?
- People are seeking memories. Resort experience can make good memories.
- Kids are restless and have a lack of patience. They want instant action. How do you get them beyond the instant gratification?
- Kids are programmed with activities.
- Sports-spring and fall. Summer camps. These are all in competition with a resort vacation.
- Kids are missing the relationship with woods and water.

- People want the comforts of home with the up north feel.
- Resorts have to become the entertainers.
- Need to find ways to encourage kids back into nature-hiking, biking, fishing.
- We need to let families know what we have to offer.
- Some resorts indicated they do not have TV's in the cabins.
- Parents appreciate that resorts offer the programmed activities-especially wholesome outdoor activities.
- Campgrounds-try to make an impression on the kids in the family-create memories for children and families.
- Society says you can't have fun unless you are busy doing something.

Why a Minnesota Resort?

- Minnesota resorts take care of their guests.
- Need to get the word out that people should not overlook Minnesota.
- Need to sell the idea of vacationing in Minnesota first. (like Hawaii, Florida, etc) Then they can choose destinations and businesses.
- Family's vacation and just being able to "be together".
- Minnesota resorting is the last of example of what a family vacation used to be.

Where is your market?

- Twin Cities- 50%, Midwest- 25% Other- 25% (Texas, California mentioned)
- People find you on the resort website, but still want the brochure
- We are a "car transportation" market.
- We need to promote Minnesota to those who may just be traveling through the state, don't just drive through.

Where will resorts in 3-5 years?

- Many resorts will not be in business.
- Resorts that have gone to PUD are not fairing as well as they expected. Try to sell as a resort.
- Resorters think their resorts are worth money more than they really are. Hard to sell.
- The number of resorts will continue to decline.
- Families cannot afford to get into the business. Hard to pass your business down within your family.
- Need to bring the business value of resorts up.
- Need resources such as tourism loan program.
- Resorts need to be a feasible business.
- All entities need to work together for resorts to continue.