

# IMEX Trade Show Report

IMEX America – Las Vegas, NV - October 12-16, 2015

## Montana Booth Representation:

- Glacier Country – Debbie Picard
- Destination Missoula – Mary Holmes
- Discover Kalispell – Dawn Jackson
- Explore Whitefish – Jessica Smith
- Visit Billings – Stefan Cattarin

## Overview:

- IMEX America is the largest MICE tradeshow in North America. 148 countries are represented at the show with 3,000 hosted buyers and 2,500 exhibitors.
- Glacier Country Tourism was matched with 8 buyers for 30 minute appointments. The Glacier Country CVB's each had their own appointments, but my Glacier Country Tourism appointments were shared amongst the Glacier Country CVB representatives.
- Each Glacier Country CVB had their own appointment from 5-8 as well.
- I met with an additional 15 buyers that did not have a scheduled appointment with us.
- We increased our database with 23 first time appointments.
- Next IMEX America: Las Vegas, NV – October 18-20, 2016.

## Appointments and projected ROI:

This year Glacier Country took the lead and worked with MTOT for more of a Montana presence at the booth by doubling the size from last year and including Billings CVB. The overall appointments went well and 30 minutes was adequate for each partner to talk about the venues that they had in their areas. The planners were quality and unlike last year this year they did not come to the meeting with a specific group or program in mind for Montana. Most had not been to Montana and wanted to meet with us to find something different for their meetings. We felt that there was an assumption that we couldn't accommodate most programs except for those smaller incentive groups. They were surprised when talking about all the meeting venues in western Montana. 4 Diamond properties and high end guest ranches were still about 75% of the requests. We all felt that our presence at this convention highlights that Montana is serious about the meetings industry and gave us all a chance to showcase that we have more than our great incentive properties and can be that perfect choice for all kinds of meetings. Planners did not want to take printed materials so our thumb drives with information were well received along the battery pack charger-gifts. We also had Montana USB drives that we set out. I brought 50 and they were all gone by the end of the show.

## Recommendations for 2016:

- It takes consistency and continued exposure to build relationships with meeting planners. This show, although expensive, gives the best exposure to quality meeting planners for Montana. Incentive planners do frequent the show which is good for our higher-end resorts and guest ranches, there are plenty of corporate and association planners as well.

- The consensus from the CVB's was that the Glacier Country Tourism combined or group appointments were better than the CVB's having individual appointments with meeting planners.
- The larger booth with warm rustic setting (leather couches and western decor) along with the MTOT backdrops were perfect. We could accommodate another 2 people with this same size booth for next year if more Montana CVB's wanted to join.
- CVB's should plan months in advance and target certain planners for appointments. IMEX does not give out a list of who is attending, but we did utilize their contact the buyer email blast system.
- We researched having a cocktail hour with signature Montana beer, but the Sands Expo Center would not allow outside alcohol. We did take photos of our appointments and Mary's office dropped them into a Montana Moment photo for us to utilize upon follow up. It was easy and maybe we could expand on this for next year with an actual photo box with Montana swag to put on for the pictures.