



Trade Show Report

IMEX America – Las Vegas, NV - October 10 - 12, 2017

Montana Booth Representation:

- + Glacier Country – Debbie Picard
- + Destination Missoula – Mimi Gustafson
- + Discover Kalispell – Dawn Jackson
- + Explore Whitefish – Dan Hansen
- + Montana's Great Falls Tourism – Jake Bash
- + Bozeman CVB – Daryl Schliem

Overview:

- + IMEX America is the largest MICE tradeshow in North America. 150 countries were represented at the show with 3,286 hosted buyers and 3,390 exhibitors.
- + Glacier Country Tourism was matched with 19 buyers for 30-minute appointments. The Glacier Country Tourism appointments were shared amongst the Glacier Country CVB representatives.
- + The Montana booth was positioned well on the show floor with great visibility. Our walk-up traffic was the best it has ever been.
- + I met with an additional 11 buyers that did not have a scheduled appointment with us.
- + We increased our database with 29 first time appointments.
- + Next IMEX America: Las Vegas, NV – October 16 - 18, 2018.

Appointments and projected ROI:

For the fourth year, Glacier Country took the lead and worked with MOTBD to create a Montana booth presence. I contacted several of the Regions and CVB's in the state. Billings did not have the man power to send anyone. Helena did not respond and Big Sky Chamber said they do not focus on the meetings market. Both Great Falls and Bozeman elected to participate again. Bozeman had 8 appointments and Great Falls has a few appointments and were instrumental in handling the walkup traffic. The overall appointments were great and 30 minutes was adequate for each partner to talk about the venues that they had in their areas. The planners were quality and they came 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 heard several planners say that they wanted to get away from the white sandy beaches and concentrate on more experiential destinations. Or they were looking domestically due to safety issues. 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. We packaged all of the CVB USB's and little gifts into our bandanas and gave those out at the end of the meeting. We had a drop your card for Montana swag and picked up a few cards but the signage didn't work so that people could see it. We would need to have a dedicated person to meet and greet or run a photo booth or activity if we choose to do this in the future.



Recommendations for 2018:

- + 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 show is growing and they plan to expand into another ballroom next year.
- + The consensus from the CVB's was that the Glacier Country Tourism combined or group appointments went really well. We all feed off of each other and the energy at the appointments is good. In particular, when someone says "Hilton Garden Inn, really?" about our convention properties it's good to have us all there explaining the quality and brands that work in Montana and YES, they are higher end than what you would find in larger cities.
- + We went back to just using high table and stools forgoing the expense of the leather chairs. Dan created burlap table clothes and brought bandanas for the toppers. We used the new MOTBD backdrops (2 total) and it worked perfect. We could accommodate 4 table with this same size booth for next year if 1 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. There was also talk about hosting an event but when asked how much budget each CVB had, the conversation quickly extinguished. We talked about having a dedicated person to run a photo booth or activity if we choose to do this in the future.
- + We also discussed opening the booth up to private companies. I am in discussions with Marlee on how to do that. Perhaps for each region or CVB that is there, they can invite one private partner? We are still discussing this and will need to have a plan by the end of the year so companies can budget.