



## **Getting the Most From Your NTA Membership**

**March 2005**

With the strategic direction that your association has been pursuing for the last three years, many can see the face of the association changing. Just three years ago, NTA accepted its first member from outside North America and, since that time, we have members in 26 different countries. It is certain that anyone who has been to an Annual Convention or Tour Operator Spring Meet in the past few years can attest to the increasing diversity of our association.

An association that includes globalization and diversity can be a huge benefit for all of its members, from those who will be attending their first event this year to members who have been participating in the association for many years. The key is identifying the changes and knowing how best to incorporate them into your business. The great benefits and buying/selling opportunities that always existed within NTA are still here – the core of the association has not changed. What has changed, however, is an expansion of opportunities for those who choose to seek them. This STAR will attempt to illustrate ways that doing business in this ever-expanding world of travel is evolving and how, through many varied benefits that are exclusive to NTA members, one can make the most of their NTA membership.

### ***Changing Marketplace***

This title carries with it many meanings. First, the changing marketplace can represent the many ways that consumers are planning and purchasing their travel-related activities. It could also indicate the way that you, in the business-to-business aspect of the industry, are conducting business. Are you still buying and selling the way you did five or 10 years ago?

While the words “changing marketplace” has many definitions, the first one we will discuss is the changes that are taking place in the face of your association’s membership and how that is offering new avenues in which to do business – new companies, new countries, new distribution outlets – the list can go on and on. The expansion of the association to include members of all types and origins can assist NTA members in better serving its customer – providing what they are wanting – but also in making the strategic alliances and partnerships that will help grow their business.

One of the changes that members are seeing is in the distribution of product. There are many options for strategic partnership that will help to increase one’s distribution channels. The Internet, destination partners, supplier partners, tour operator to tour operator – all of these are perfect examples of ways that distribution channels are

changing and growing. Having access to a larger variety of members can help any company in growing or becoming part of these diverse channels of distribution.

With these changing distribution channels, the buying and selling on the Tour and Travel Exchange floor at Annual Convention each year is evolving. And with that, companies are looking at the way they market their product, the ways they are utilizing the open Exchange floor, and the networking opportunities therein. With so much to utilize on the floor – custom group tour operators, FIT operators, special interest operators – there is more business than ever that can be obtained during that week in November.

One of the final aspects of the Convention that is often overlooked is follow-up. Making 60 contacts is great but unless the follow-up occurs, there is no business to be gained. Members should strive to turn these many alliance and business opportunities into sales and the best way to do that is post convention follow-up. If leads are not followed-up on after the Convention and throughout the year, business will not result. Even those who don't go to the Annual Convention can get business by utilizing the Membership Directory and NTA Online to contact NTA peers with information – providing year-long business opportunities. However, if opportunities are not followed-up properly, a huge advantage has just been turned into a disadvantage.

To summarize, the open Exchange floor, introduced two years ago in Charlotte, and other year-long opportunities such as NTA Online and the Member Directory, provide expanded opportunities as illustrated by the following:

- **Four days of business opportunities** – members can get business every day, not just on DMO-Day or Supplier-Day. Now, it is four days of business opportunities. Suppliers and DMOs who are accustomed to arriving the day prior to their pre-scheduled appointment days and leaving once that is complete are missing out on huge opportunities to add to their appointment books.
- **New Business Contacts** – Aside from tour operator business, suppliers and DMOs are starting to look to each other to form partnerships and alliances to create a more profitable and attractive product. So, visiting the DMO workstations and networking within your own category is now a viable business opportunity that can be found at the NTA Convention. Tour operators have had the opportunity for partnering and now, suppliers and DMOs are looking for that opportunity as well. It is available to them through the many networking opportunities and the open Exchange floor format. To summarize – channels of distribution are changing and the Exchange floor now offers something for everyone.
- **New Kind of Business on the Floor** – the goal of NTA to expand and diversify, both domestically and globally, has led to a wealth of opportunity on the Exchange floor. Inbound operators, outbound operators, Internet companies, technology companies, etc. can all be found at NTA.
- **Year-long Opportunities** – by proper follow-up and utilization of both the Convention floor, the Member Directory and NTA Online, you have business opportunities all year long. But, don't forget the key to success .... FOLLOW-UP!

The other aspect of NTA membership that is valuable for the changing marketplace can be found with this and other documents produced by the Strategic Development Council. The role of the SDC is to monitor changing and emerging trends in the travel industry

and with the traveling consumer. These STARS, along with the Current Assessment Reports (CARs), Market Assessment Plans (MAPs) and other research is available to members online. Keeping on top of the product of the SDC can keep your company ahead of the curve on trends and product ideas – and it is all free to members to use and discuss.

### ***Product Development Trips***

The Product Development Trips – or PDTs as they are often called – is another outstanding opportunity that NTA is offering to its members that is hard to find with any other association. For the tour operator, these trips help open their business to destinations and packaging partners that, in the past, would have been more difficult to find. The best part, you are brought to these destinations and suppliers by fellow members. So, you know that you can put confidence that you are getting the best of the best when it comes to suppliers and other partners in that particular destination.

For our destination and supplier members, this is an opportunity not just to take seven minutes to sell yourself to NTA tour operators, but to get them in your destination, sleeping in your hotels, visiting your museums, restaurants and attractions and giving everyone the chance to expand their product line and increase business. While the PDTs started out as a way for our new members outside of North America to introduce themselves to our tour operator members, we have now expanded the offering to any and all members of the association. If you are interested in proposing a PDT to NTA for promotion to its tour operator members, you can see the guidelines for submitting such a bid at NTA Online by clicking on

[http://www.NTA.com/index.php?s=&url\\_channel\\_id=25&url\\_subchannel\\_id=&url\\_article\\_id=1889&change\\_well\\_id=2](http://www.NTA.com/index.php?s=&url_channel_id=25&url_subchannel_id=&url_article_id=1889&change_well_id=2).

### ***Areas of Interest & Marketing Program (AIMs)***

As your association strives to become the place where buyers and sellers of packaged travel come together, we wanted to provide support and education for the expanding interests of our members and give you the chance to develop your own smaller communities based on these interests. The AIM program, launched in the summer of 2004, gives you that outlet to come together, learn and network with like-minded colleagues and get more from a membership that is customized by you.

The AIM program consists of six categories, each focusing on a specific interest or market in the travel industry.

- Active & Adventure Travel
- Affinity & Custom Group Travel
- Cultural & Life Enrichment Travel
- Receptive Services
- Self-Guided & Independent Travel
- Student & Youth Travel

You can find more detail on each of these six AIM categories at NTA Online by clicking on the following link:

[http://www.NTA.com/index.php?s=&url\\_channel\\_id=22&url\\_subchannel\\_id=&url\\_article\\_id=1780&change\\_well\\_id=2](http://www.NTA.com/index.php?s=&url_channel_id=22&url_subchannel_id=&url_article_id=1780&change_well_id=2).

All members are encouraged to join one or more of the AIMs. Tour operator members are asked to designate a Primary AIM – that being the AIM that best fits your business – and up to two Secondary AIMs. The secondary AIM could be another area in which your business is focused or an area that you would like to tap into and want to draw upon your colleagues knowledge and experience in which to assist. To sign-up, e-mail us at [questions@ntastaff.com](mailto:questions@ntastaff.com) and let us know which AIM(s) you want to join.

Each AIM has a Web page on NTA.com with relevant articles, research stats and links, as well as discussion folders on NTA's member forums. Every AIM had face-to-face crackerbarrels in Toronto that were received with a great deal of enthusiasm and will be back in Detroit. These sessions give you a chance to meet with fellow AIM members and sit in on discussions of several different AIM communities. **You don't have to belong to an AIM to utilize any of this information** – the Web site, the seminars, etc. They are open to anyone and everyone and, if you chose to align with a particular AIM after experiencing the benefits that is your option.

### ***Technology Preferred Provider Program***

For anyone who attended the 2004 Annual Convention in Toronto and had a chance to visit the Technology Pavilion, you know that NTA is leading the way in bringing various technology solutions to its members. Through the newly launched Preferred Provider Program, NTA is seeking the best of the best in the technology world to offer its products and be a resource to all members of the association. The program is underway and the goal is to find providers of technology that is specific to the needs of all of our members. From simple Web development to backend office technology to the most advance reservations and booking systems – you'll be able to use your membership in NTA to access the companies who can provide exactly what you need.

For more information on the Preferred Provider Program, contact Tonya Cummings, NTA's Director of Technology Strategy, at 800-682-8886, ext. 3547 or by e-mail at [tonya.cummings@ntastaff.com](mailto:tonya.cummings@ntastaff.com).

### ***Education – a Lifelong Learning Process***

While education and seminars as a whole are not unique to NTA, there are some aspects of the educational program that provides members with that little something extra that they come to expect for their membership in this association. Throughout the year, NTA members are offered a variety of Web-based seminars on any number of topics. Several topics, such as Evaluation of ROI and the Dot-Travel Initiative along with pre-convention information and more have been made available, just to name a few. Add to that list the CTP program and the continued emphasis on personal and

professional growth, NTA is providing something for everyone – helping to make the education of its members a lifelong process for NTA, not just at Annual Convention.

Additionally, for its tour operator members, NTA offers the Tour Operator Spring Meet every year. This is an opportunity for operators to attend seminars focused on their business needs, network with their peers and do business – all in a resort-like, relaxed setting. Operators who annually attend the Spring Meet list it as a most valued benefit. In addition to education that is great for the most seasoned operator to those new to the industry, there is also a chance for operators who own their company to get together with other principals and discuss the issues that are unique to them. It is truly a unique offering for tour operators.

### ***Courier, Tuesday and Other Articles***

One of the best educational tools is something you, as a member, get every month – *Courier* magazine. The articles and business tools that are incorporated into the magazine each month provide a wealth of ideas, education and opportunity. While the information above discussed the seminars – both in-person and on the Web – that NTA provides, just as much information can be gleaned each month to further develop your professional education and career in your monthly association magazine. You can even access archived articles from past issues of *Courier* online.

Similarly, you receive a weekly association e-newsletter – *Tuesday* – that is designed to keep you abreast of all association happenings. To get the most from your membership dollars and to know what new and enhanced benefits are available to you, nothing is more concise than your weekly issues of *Tuesday*.

Finally, there are other articles and information that serve to educate you, the member, under the Research button of NTA Online. Information, like this STAR, and much more are at your fingertips.

### ***Corporate Partners, Transportation Providers, Benefit Providers and Other Member Benefits***

NTA has a strong Corporate Partner and Benefit Provider program that, through virtue of membership in the association, provides members with money-saving programs and offerings. These programs are established to provide members with the opportunity to save money in a variety of ways – from discounts on insurance and shipping to discounted EuroRail passes. To learn more about the Corporate Partners and Benefit Providers, visit NTA Online at [http://www.ntaonline.com/index.php?s=&url\\_channel\\_id=18&url\\_subchannel\\_id=&url\\_article\\_id=1166&change\\_well\\_id=2](http://www.ntaonline.com/index.php?s=&url_channel_id=18&url_subchannel_id=&url_article_id=1166&change_well_id=2). You'll also find the latest information on NTA's involvement with the new .travel domain and how, as an NTA member, you can obtain your own .travel domain name!

## ***Summary***

A membership in NTA brings with it great opportunities. This STAR has only touched on some of the major benefits that membership brings and how a member can make the most of these offerings. As the membership grows and expands, there will be more and more ways that members can make the most of their dollars spent. The key is to monitor these changes and enhancements and find a way for your company to take advantage of all that NTA has to offer.

Your NTA membership can work for you all year long – the tools exist. To make it work, follow-up on contacts and information gathered during the Convention. Be sure to utilize the varied resources available with NTA Online. Your association management team is always available to discuss these benefits in more detail and assist you in accessing information. They can be contacted at 800-682-8886 or at [questions@ntastaff.com](mailto:questions@ntastaff.com).