

Copper Valley Regional Branding Workshop

Prepared for:

***Department of Commerce,
Community, and Economic Development***

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REGIONAL BRANDING WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Introduction

The State of Alaska, as part of their *Developing Rural Alaska Tourism* program, sponsored a regional branding workshop in Glennallen on April 23. The Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development worked with representatives from the Copper Valley Chamber of Commerce, the Copper Valley Development Association, and the Prince William Sound Community College to organize and promote the workshop.

DCCED contracted with McDowell Group to present information and facilitate a branding discussion. The presentation included an overview of branding and brand development examples. Participants participated in several activities that helped to identify the region's market strengths. The event concluded with a discussion of "next steps" in the Copper Valley regional branding and tourism development process.

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Workshop Agenda

Saturday, April 23
9:00 am to 3:30 pm
Prince William Sound Community College

- 8:30 am Coffee/continental breakfast
- 9:00 am Introductions
- Discussion of workshop goals and activities
- 9:15 am What is Branding?
- 9:30 am Presentation about Alaska visitors
- Who are they, what do they do, what do they expect
 - Discussion
- 10:15 am Break
- 10:30 am Branding examples from other Alaskan communities
- Approach, costs, time, accomplishments, lessons learned
 - Discussion
- 12:00 pm Lunch break
- 1:00 pm Begin facilitated branding discussion for Copper Valley Region
Small group activity.
- 2:30 pm Break
- 3:30 pm Review and closing comments

Introductions and Goals

Tracy - Copper Valley Chamber and DART

Help develop businesses. See if we need to do this.

Alan - Gakona Junction Village

Here to learn. Share what I know from the state's program.

Vicky - Planner for Wrangell St. Elias National Park.

Board member for Wrangell MTN Center several other organizations.

Learn how we should be incorporating the park?

Katrina - Community College - DART

Can incorporate information into tourism classes.

Kathy - Copper Moose B&B - Chamber

Tourism is a new area for me.

Paul - Pres. Economic Development Council.

Also, science and environmental education.

Served on Utah & CA tourism boards.

This effort needs to tie into public sentiment in our Economic Development plan.

Ross - In tourism class. Have experience in bars/restaurants/const./etc.

Don't want to reinvent the wheel.

Personal niche/interests are hunting & fishing.

Smitty - WSENP - Chief of interpretation and public affairs. Also part of community.

Need to be harmonious with national park.

Need to maintain special nature and ability to find solitude.

Suzanne - PWSCC. Also has rafting and bus company.

Where do we fit? We need understand the geology.

We are not a valley. We are a basin. What are the images? Maybe Copper River Park.

Ed - Backcountry Connection. Chamber and tourism class.

Jennifer - WSE lodging and tour company. Promote vacations.

John - Director Copper Valley Development Assn.

Branding has come up in every meeting (wide range).

Identify unity in image. Need to be cohesive.

Also present: Dru Garson and Melissa Novogoratz, State of Alaska, DCCED.

Branding Overview

Branding is a “promise” that captures people’s imagination. Branding focuses on the distinctive aspects of a destination that enrich the visitor and provide memorable impressions. Before beginning, the group needs to be prepared to ask tough questions and accept honest answers.

Branding is not:

- A new logo or slogan.
- An advertising campaign.
- New brochures or promotional activities.

A well-executed branding program can:

- Differentiate a destination from competitors.
- Create a clear expectation about the visitors’ experience.
- Can increase support and involvement for tourism from residents, community leaders, and the business community.
- Can increase visitation and/or the financial benefits from tourism.

According to the authors of *Destination BrandScience*, published by the International Association of Convention and Visitor Bureaus, “A brand is the yardstick by which visitors measure their destination experience. Be genuine!”

Five key areas:

- Resident input
- Visitor input
- Competitive analysis
- Marketing
- Living the brand

Residents

They are the stakeholders in the process. Early involvement is essential.

Need to ask:

- Who are we?
- What do we offer?
- What are we known for?
- What do we want to happen/not happen as a result of tourism development?

Ways to capture resident input:

- This workshop
- Talk with public officials
- Hold meetings
- Survey residents
- Talk with land owners and managers
- Talk with business community

Visitors

Review existing research.

Conduct your own visitor research asking:

- What do they know about the destination?
- What did they expect?
- What did they do?
- How satisfied/unsatisfied are they with their experience?

Copper Valley serves many markets. Expectations and experience is likely different for each market.

Summer markets include:

- Highway traveler
- Adventurers
- Alaska residents
- Cruise passengers
- International visitors

Winter markets include:

- Alaska residents
- Adventurers

Competitive Analysis

Look at your competition.

How do they promote themselves?

Competition may be different for each market.

For example:

- People that come for fishing or snowmachining may have made a choice between Copper Valley and another Alaska destination.
- People that come to visit the National Park may have made a choice between Alaska and other states or countries.

Display competitors' marketing materials on a wall or on a large conference table.

Leave them for a while so you can examine them more than once.

What are they saying?

How do they promote themselves?

What messages and images do they use?

Marketing

Begin with a self-analysis.

Collect Copper Valley marketing materials:

- Guide books
- Advertising
- Brochures

What messages are in the marketplace now?

Is there consistency?
What messages and images are the strongest?
What is unique?
What has emotional appeal for visitors?

Develop a brand statement

This is a statement that defines the Copper Valley product/experience in a way that differentiates the destination and provides an emotional connection.
The statement is rarely used in this form in ads or brochures, although phrases may be used.
Not a mission statement.
Not a slogan or tagline – that comes next.

Develop the graphic representation

Your destination and brand are represented with:

- Name
- Visual symbol/logo
- Tagline or slogan

Seek professional graphic design skills for this stage.
It is often valuable to have the “creative team” involved in some or all of the previous phases.

Living the Brand

How can you deliver on the “promise” made to visitors?

Tropical resort example:

- How do you answer the phone?
- What is the employee culture?
- What is the employee and guest dress code?
- What do our ads look like?
- How do we incorporate the brand into our receptions and events?

If Copper Valley promotes outdoor adventure, how can you “live the brand”?

- Maps and trail information.
- Information about local tour guides.
- Customer service training that includes outdoor adventure information.

How can you get the word out to community members?

- Talk with community groups.
- Meet with community leaders.
- Train visitor information center staff and service centers.
- Train employees who interact with visitors at entry points: airports, highway stops, public land managers, etc.
- Employee training at individual businesses.

If the marketing messages are not genuine or acceptable to residents, the branding effort may backfire. Success at this point is often linked to the groundwork conducted at the beginning of the branding process.

Group Comments and Discussion

There is an element missing from this discussion – the “outside” coming in.

An example is the new Princess hotel.

There are other plans for development.

The National Park is increasing marketing efforts.

Denali has capacity issues.

ATIA –State-Fed-NPS all promoting Wrangell St. Elias.

Visitor expectations.

We need to have some control over the message.

How will we be marketed?

I worry that our lifestyle will be affected.

Need a Core Planning and Marketing Group

Maybe a local chapter of ATIA to address issues.

National Park marketing and access improvement program:

- \$750K from NPS

- Plus ATIA added \$150K

- Total \$900K

WSENP starting to use these funds.

- Tour operator fam coming in May.

- New product development.

- This fall will be a travel agent fam.

- DOTPF involved also.

Big Picture

Visitors’ awareness is about the park, but their impact is at the edges.

We have to protect the rivers, Native Corp. lands, and other private lands.

Don’t want to repeat another national park’s experience:

- Books promoted “solitude.”

- Lost qualities when they started to grow.

Array of possibilities – expectations.

Control?

We offer wilderness and adventure.

It is not an easy place to visit.

We are not Disney.

We don’t want to be Denali: “Glitter Gulch”

Case Study Highlights

Fairbanks

In 1999, the Fairbanks CVB created their logo featuring the sun and a snowflake. It was developed with input from their graphic designer, CVB staff, and board. Timeline: between 3 and 4 months.

When creating marketing materials, FCVB adheres to four brand tenets developed by the board:

- Sell Fairbanks as a year-round destination. Cross-sell summer and winter.
- Sell Fairbanks as a real Alaskan community. Use real residents in ads, brochures, website.
- Promote Fairbanks as a gateway to Denali, Northern and Western Alaska, other Interior destinations.
- Feature rivers and northern lights prominently.

They are working on several ways to “live the brand” including incorporating concepts into the new Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center. They are also developing a Fairbanks resident greeter program.

Recently, FCVB has been researching the brand development process. They submitted a \$30,000 proposal for brand development process to their local government. They want to expand the development process to include community residents. They want to be sure that their marketing is as effective as possible. They also want broader usage of the brand by other organizations.

Mat-Su

The Mat-Su CVB had a marketing plan and budget in place. They struggled with having no single, unifying identify for the large region.

A few years ago, the CVB staff was working on a radio jingle. They wanted to promote Mat-Su as a fun destination. They used the phrase “Yahoo! Mat-Su” in the jingle. They had previously printed it on the back of their brochure. They discovered that the phrase resonated with Anchorage and Mat-Su residents.

Mat-Su CVB staff and residents have fun with it; people exclaim “Yahoo! Mat-Su” at business meetings and events. The new image has helped grow overall support for the CVB and the tourism industry.

“Yahoo! Mat-Su” became the centerpiece of their program. It encompasses an emotion, a feeling, about fun. The CVB changed the images and copy they used in all communications. Now they create an expectation of fun and adventure. The website, visitor guide, trade show booth have a consistent look.

The CVB also changed the way they present areas within the Borough.

- McKinley Country
- Glacier County
- Gold Country
- Lake Country
- Off the Beaten Path

Ketchikan

They are just completing a year-long process.

The Ketchikan Visitors Bureau's marketing committee developed the RFP.

They researched and hand-selected eight firms and invited responses.

Criteria included:

- Brand Ketchikan as a must-see destination.
- Wanted to differentiate Ketchikan from other communities.
- Wanted local buy-in from funding organizations and members.

Cost:

\$25,000 for brand development

\$11,000 for tag line

\$50,000 for website redevelopment

\$86,000 total

The KVB wanted a community-driven process. "We'll tell them what we are."

The creative team conducted an initial site visit, held interviews with community representatives from all sectors, and conducted workshop with marketing committee members and staff. They developed a "brand core" concept and three draft "brand truth statements." The KVB committee reviewed and provided comments.

Once revisions were made, the creative team began working on logo concepts. Initial designs were narrowed down to three and taken to the membership and community for feedback. The KVB recently shared details about the process and the results with members and community.

Next steps include rewrite marketing plan, redo all KVB collateral, take brand philosophy to business community, build brand awareness, and create guidelines for brand use.

Petersburg

After completing their tourism marketing plan, the Petersburg Economic Development Council wanted to develop a logo and tagline. An RFP was distributed to eight firms known for working with Alaska destination marketing organizations.

The graphic design team reviewed competitive destination images, recently completed ATIA brand development process and research, and branding concepts suggested by Petersburg Chamber of Commerce members. Several draft logos were developed for review by the committee.

Two rounds of consumer tests were conducted with Petersburg's target markets including independent visitors, Alaska residents, and small ship passengers. The first round of

surveys captured preferences and feedback on logos alone. The second round of surveys included logos paired with taglines.

At each phase, intercept survey results were shared with the committee and the graphic design team. Once finalized, the logo and tagline was shared with community with mixed results.

Alaska Travel Industry Association

ATIA recently completed a multiple-year brand development program. Estimated cost: \$200,000. It was a research and consumer-driven process. The research included two rounds of mall intercept surveys and focus groups in key national markets. A bound document that includes the research process and results is available from ATIA. (McDowell Group's copy was circulated among participants during the workshop.)

Group Comments and Discussion

Most communities have a funding base.

How do we do that here with no government?

How do we get out to residents and develop ownership?

This needs to be consistent with community values.

We also need an educational process – a feedback loop.

How do we prevent “theme park?”

Branding is start of control.

Who do we target?

Borough? How to get control?

The larger companies have already established their messages and goals.

Are we big enough?

Adversarial? New leadership now.

We need to get the big boy on the block to work with us.

We are more organized now.

Princess is only one entity. There are more look at us.

They are contracting with several local businesses. They used to hire their own.

They didn't follow through on contracts. People made capital investments.

We need to be PUBLICIZING the TRUTH.

We have to protect our resources.

Parks has restrictions and a permitting process that can help us preserve the experience.

Copper Valley Attractions

The workshop included a small-group activity where participants identified aspects that visitors and residents most liked about the Copper Valley region. These items were then plotted on a chart to help illustrate which attractions and activities were most compelling and unique. Results are presented in the appendix.

Emotional Appeal and Impact

Workshop participants were asked to complete a “fill-in-the-blank” exercise. This activity helped the group articulate the emotional impact that results from experiencing the Copper Valley.

- We provide superlatives, which makes people ooh and ahh.
- We provide road accessibility, which makes people visit.
- We provide non-crowded opportunities, which makes people visit.
- We provide non-crowded opportunities, which makes people like residents resist visitors.
- We provide world class visitor opportunities, which make people like residents resist and sometimes resent visitors who take advantage of them.
- We provide solitude, which makes people’s spirit renew.
- We provide a sense of adventure, which make people exhilarated.
- We provide history, which makes people reflect.
- We provide a wilderness experience, which makes people challenge themselves.
- We provide adventure, which makes people excited to be here.
- We provide friendliness and hospitality, which makes people feel good about our area.
- We provide nature experiences, which make people feel a source of natural understanding.
- We provide access to wild Alaska, which makes people realize their dreams.
- We provide the door to Alaska’s wilderness, which makes people healthy and fulfilled.
- We provide world class salmon fishing, which makes people fulfill their expectations.
- We provide dream variation and satisfaction, which makes people leave large amounts of money.
- We provide huge wilderness, glaciers, and mountain ranges frosted with charismatic mega fauna, which makes people humble, inspired, their need for adventure and solitude are fulfilled.
- We provide sheep, fish, berries, and mushrooms, which makes people fed and fulfill their native experience.
- We provide the Kennecott, which makes people curious, intrigued, and awe-inspired.
- We provide fishing, which makes people happy.
- We provide mountain wilderness, which makes people breathe.
- We provide wilderness, which makes people spiritual.
- We provide frost heaves, which makes people crash.
- We provide space, which makes people share.
- We provide challenge, which makes people change/grow.
- We provide the Kennecott, which makes people consider the past compared to the present.
- We provide long drive on gravel roads, which makes people consider scale.
- We provide lack of electricity, which makes people ponder alternative energy.
- We provide volcano’s, which makes people appreciate their smallness.
- We provide Ahtna culture, which makes people embrace diversity.

Next Steps: Action Plan

Who is Missing From This Discussion?

- Copper Valley – (REAA)
- Copper Valley School District
- Mentasta
- Paxson
- Lake Louise

Group Comments and Discussion

State's marketing purpose is different than ours. They promote the state. It is our job to get people to our community.

Gulkana River example. BLM promoted fishing without a plan.

Broadening residents' involvement.

Steering committee.

Newspaper story. A series as we go down process.

Need superlatives. We are the biggest, best _____.

Need to tell people why we live here.

Two marketing items to add lists: Pipeline and Bible College

Getting Visitor Input

DCCED survey project.

Develop a surveys to hand out at area hotels and tours.

Visitor center guest book comments.

Park Service doing a survey at Kennicott.

Dru will look for sample surveys.

Next Steps

Marketing analysis of competition.

Self analysis of current marketing messages.

Develop Steering Committee.

Identify major organizations:

- Chamber
- Comm. Dev. Assn.
- College
- BLM
- Ahtna/CRNA
- Parks Service
- Business Community
- Princess
- PWSCC
- Bible College

Next 3-4 Months the busy season.

Share notes from today's workshop.

Get questionnaire out by middle of June.

- Motives
- Expectations
- Experiences
- Make it a targeted survey – branding-focused.

Need to identify funding sources.

DART is an 18-month program. Dru/Melissa will research options.

This is key. It doesn't matter what our brand is if we can't tell anyone.

Tough part for Copper Valley.

Don't have municipality, a vehicle to collect funds.

We're not the driving force.

We need to know how to tell people about services once they hear about the destination.

We belong to ATIA.

They will use Bell's and Bearfoot travel guides.

We need to develop our brand and message.

Others can use what we develop.

We need to piggyback on other marketing efforts.

We need to get through this process.

John can centralize communication.

We can ask for participants in the newspaper article. Come get involved

Closing Comments and Discussion

Liked the presentation.

We have different views. We are all passionate about this place.

Come back.

We can use the college as needed.

Thanks.

We love to live here. We want to share with a "portion" of the world.

CVDA will continue to be involved.

We need to be upfront with community and be vigilant about the outcomes.

We'll need feedback if we don't want trouble later.

I wasn't aware of effort. This is deeper than I thought.

We can benefit from experiences other's have had.

We can't be passive while others direct our future.

There is a commonality to other discussions like government and school.

It is an evolution.

Appropriate timing.

We are unique in so many ways.

This is a long-term process.

We need to get others interested.

Thanks to Katrina, Suzanne and PWSCC for taking an interest and making this possible.

This is a new time in our community.

We need to guide it.

We need to recognize that this weekend is the Native basketball tournament.

The impacts are extensive thanks to CRNA and AHTNA.

We have a long road ahead.

This won't happen in a year or two.

We are at the cusp of getting noticed as a major destination.

We can't do it by ourselves.

The timing is good. People are inspired and enthusiastic.

- McCarthy
- Christochina
- Mentasta
- New park superintendent

Steady by jerks.

Appendix

Experiences Valued and Enjoyed

Visitors

Nature - Glaciers and Mountains
 Wildlife
 Kennecott/History/Conservation
 Fishing
 Hunting
 Motorized Rec - Sno machine/ATV
 Scenic Flights
 Hiking/Backpacking
 Wilderness Cabin/Woodsy Accommodations
 Rafting
 Solitude, Adventure
 Wilderness - Non crowded camping

Residents (Local)

Nature - Glaciers and Mountains
 Privacy
 Wildlife
 Kennecott/History/Conservation
 Little Government
 Fishing
 Sense of Community
 Hunting
 Not many people
 Access to ANCH
 Motorized Rec - Sno machine/ATV
 Scenic Flights
 Mushroom picking
 Berry Picking
 Heritage - Historic & Prehistoric, Native
 Conserve & Share
 Wilderness - Non crowded camping

	Unique	
History		Accessible Rustic Lodging Accessible Solitude Fishing Wilderness Kennecott Rafting Scenic Flights Hiking/Backpacking Access to Anchorage
Nice		Compelling
(Visitor) Hunting		Privacy Little Government Sense of Community Not Many People Mushrooms Berries (Resident) Hunting Wildlife Motorized Recreation Adventure
	Common	

Residents

Hunting
 Fishing
 Run Businesses
 Cross Country
 Snow Machining
 Photography
 Sight Seeing
 Flight Seeing
 Rafting
 Shooting
 Dip Netting
 Fish Whale
 Dog Musers
 Gardening
 Horses
 Farming
 Guiding

Visitors

Hunting
 Fishing
 Flight Seeing
 Dining
 Ground Tours
 Dog Tours
 Trail Rides
 Museums
 Rafting
 Trekking
 Biking - MT
 Mountain Climbing
 Back Packing
 Camping
 Photography
 Glacier Viewing & Hiking
 Mt. Skiing
 X-country Skiing
 Snow Boarding/Machining

	Unique	
Horseback Rides Photo Camping		Wrangell Mountains Cooper River salmon Trekking Mt Biking Mt Climbing Glacier Viewing & Hiking Helicopter Seeing Dipnetting Fish Wheels
Nice		Compelling
Dining Ground Tours Dog Tours Museums Rafting Mt. Biking Camping Photo		Rafting Fishing Hunting Flight Seeing Mt. Biking Camping Mt. Skiing X-country Skiing Snow Boarding Snow Machining Dog Mushing
	Common	

Residents

Hunting
 Fish
 Snowmachine
 ATV's
 Boat - rafting, ect...
 Dog Race
 Hiking
 Hiking - Back Country
 Berry Picking
 Crafting/Artist
 Subsistence lifestyle – Dipnetting
 Photography
 Nature Study

Visitors

Fish
 Rafting
 Animal Viewing
 Sight Seeing
 Adventure Tourism
 Flight Seeing
 Auroras
 History
 ATV's
 Dipnetting
 Glaciers
 Camping
 Museum
 NRS
 Photography
 Nature Study
 Biking Tours

	Unique	
Glaciers Aurora		Dipnetting NPS - Largest Kennicott/History
Not So		Compelling
Berry picking Sight Seeing Museum Photography Nature Study Crafting/Artist Biking/Tours		Backcountry Adv. Dog Race Hunting Rafting Fishing Skiing Snowmachining
	Common	

Activities	Visitors	Residents
Fishing - Dipnetting/Fish Whales	X	X
Hunting	X	X AK Residents
Rivers - Rafting, canoeing, kayaking	X	X
Snowmachining		X + AK State
Hockey		X + AK State
Mushing		X + AK State
Research	X	
Hiking, Climbing, Biking, Glacier Hiking	X	X Less so
Subs activities		X
Sight seeing/Flight seeing	X	X
Scale	X	X
Geologic Processes at work	X	X
Mining - Contemp. & Historic Gold Panning	X	X
Pipeline -Viewing/Work	X	X
Accelerate Chance for land changing hands		X
Natural Landscapes	X	X
History /Culture Exp	X	
Local Arts & Crafts	X	X
Wilderness Exp	X	X
Camping	X	X
Birding	X	
Contemporary AK Lifestyle	X	X
National Park World Heritage	X	

	Unique	
Mining Snow Sports		Wilderness Flight Seeing Scale Park/World Heritage History/Culture Arts and Crafts Fishing/Hunting Hiking/Climbing Rivers/Landscape Birding
Nice		Compelling
Camping		Pipeline
	Common	