

2018 Advertising Report and Recommendations

January 2018

For 2018, we want to try and expand our marketing reach, building on the positive response we saw in 2017 to many of our marketing efforts.

While we want to bring in more visitors overall, in particular we want to push an increase in RAL traffic, continue the increased visitorship we saw for our seasonal events (Pumpkin and Santa Trains) and lay the ground work for pushing more venue events (weddings, tour groups, special parties, etc.)

To this end, Big Fish and I have worked to evaluate where we can find the best “bang for the buck” on marketing, with an eye toward our target markets, what message we want to convey and working to find “flexible” marketing. By flexible, we mean a mode where we can change the message easily, say from general visits to RAL to a seasonal event.

As many of us are aware, family visits seem to be some of our most lucrative and have good dwell times on the property. Families also tend to use more services in the community. This led us to look at marketing that would appeal to and aim at families and specifically mothers, who are often the drivers for vacation and day trip decisions.

The Target Markets we broke out are:

- Families
 - With children or grandchildren 5-17
 - Medium and higher income
- Travelers to region, defined as Plumas County and 1 hour drive radius from Portola
 - Includes Truckee, Reno, Susanville
 - Target Bay Area market travelers
- Cross-Over Visitors
 - Travelers who come to the region by means of another event/venue looking for something more to do. (i.e. travel for a wedding and have fews days to explore the area, or golf trips with families looking for something to do)
 - San Francisco, San Jose, Walnut Creek, Danville, Marin and surrounding areas
 - This target already has accommodations and is in the location for the weekend and looking for supplemental activities
- Residents within day trip distance, defined as 2-1/2 hour drive radius from Portola
 - Includes Truckee, Reno, Susanville, Chico, Carson City, Sacramento, Oroville, Marysville – Yuba City, Auburn
- History and rail history enthusiasts
- Machine enthusiasts
 - Auto clubs
 - Motorcycle clubs
- Event venue seekers
 - Weddings
 - Birthdays
 - Special Events
- School Groups

- School field trips for history
- Technical school education trips

To reach these markets, we are looking at 4 main areas of marketing:

1. Regional print guides
2. Websites that focus on information for activities, travelers and families (particularly ones where we are already seeing interest and traffic from)
3. Websites that are known referrals to us
4. Radio ads (including free Public Service Announcements)
5. Regional print ads for specific events (Reno Gazette Journal, Deals and Wheels, etc.)

We have also worked in some direct appeals in the form of mailing and phone campaigns, aiming directly at local businesses and residents and at past RAL purchasers.

There are also some ideas for cross marketing and joint marketing / admission projects.

We looked extensively at print ads and billboards, but the costs on many of these is quite high for the reach. We are recommending we follow this plan for 2018 and then reevaluate in September / October and at that time consider if we want to change the mix or directions for 2019.

Here is a breakdown of the specific marketing recommendations:

Big Fish contract for 2018 - \$17,280 for year

- 12 hours per month average
- This is based on the hours worked in 2017 and expected additional work under the expanded marketing plan

Already Approved by the Board

ESPN / KOH Radio – \$1,400 - already purchased

- Radios spots
- March through December
- RAL, opening, events, general

Pioneer RV Park Guide Ad - \$185 – already purchased

- Printed guide
- Whole year

General Marketing Buys

Visitor Guide Book – \$435

- Printed guidebook
- ¼ page color
- Whole year
- Big Fish and Eugene Vicknair to execute

Graeagle.com - \$1,378 (discount package)

- Website
- Link and Grand Banner Ad
- Free monthly stories / features
- Whole year
- Big Fish and Eugene Vicknair to execute

MarinMommies.com - \$195

- Website
- “Skyscraper” double height banner ad
- Can be animated GIF
- 3 Months – April through June
- We already receive some referrals from this website
- Big Fish and Eugene Vicknair to execute

Facebook ads and boosts - \$600

- Regular posts with information and promotion
- Boost posts and run Facebook ads from March through December
- Big Fish and Eugene Vicknair to execute with assistance from KC Dunn and Greg Elems
- Also add more LIKES of other Facebook pages that are relevant / connected to us

YouTube ads - \$800

- Create 2 new promo videos: Run A Locomotive and General museum
 - Videos created by Big Fish
- Promote these through YouTube search and in video ads from April through July at \$200 per month (equates to 1,000 to 2,000 promoted video views per month)
- Add additional videos on WPRM dedicated channel covering:
 - History of equipment and railroad
 - Clips from historic / archives films
 - Events at museum
 - Information on museum programs (RAL, Operations, Mechanical)
- Big Fish and Eugene Vicknair to execute

Event Specific Marketing Buys

Feather Publications - \$800 (from event budget for all but Railroad Days)

- Events: Light The Fire, Railroad Days, Pumpkin Patch, Santa Train

- Big Fish and Eugene Vicknair to execute

Deals and Wheels - \$900 (from event budget for Pumpkin Patch and Santa Train)

- Events: Railroad Days, Pumpkin Patch, Santa Train
- Jointly with City of Portola (split cost)
- Big Fish and Eugene Vicknair to execute

Reno Gazette Journal - \$2,400 (from event budget for Pumpkin Patch and Santa Train)

- Events: Opening, Railroad Days, Pumpkin Patch, Santa Train
- Big Fish and Eugene Vicknair to execute

Wedding / Event Promotion - \$1,000 for advertising

- Create venue package to work with wedding planners
 - Have options for various contingencies and group size
- Set up baggage car for wedding / event use starting in May
- Promote with on-line wedding planning sites (TheKnot.com, MyWeddings.com) and with wedding planners – advertising on TheKnot is \$500 for 3 months

Direct Marketing Actions and Promotions

Brochure Distribution

- Place brochures in local tourist businesses in Plumas County
 - Restaurants, gift shops

Business Sponsorship Direct Mailing - \$300

- New mailing to regional businesses
- 150 piece mailing
- Phone call follow ups
- Targeted for February – March 2018
- Big Fish and Eugene Vicknair to execute, with Big Fish and KC Dunn to handle follow up calls

RAL Promotions

- Direct call promotion offering RAL discounts for previous purchasers
 - Calls to be done by KC Dunn, coordinated with Big Fish
- General RAL discount offer
 - Get 20% off RAL when booked in April and May 2018
 - Current FRRS members get an additional 5% off
- Membership and RAL offer
 - Get ½ price Active or Family new membership along with 20% off RAL if they book any time in 2018

- RALs to be coordinated to maximize efficiency – specific days will be offered when we can guarantee RAL engineer is available
- Also consider peak / off-peak pricing
 - If we prefer to have RALs on Wednesdays Thursdays, for example, offer 5% discount on those days to concentrate the RALs on those days.

Direct eMail Marketing

- 1-2 times a month eMail blast to email list and media
- Each blast is themed (memberships 1 month, RAL 1 month, events, etc.)
- Include special deals
- Will be interesting content with both promotion and information
- Using Big Fish eMail back end system

Cooperative Marketing

Joint admission offer with Animal Ark

- Regular Adult admission at Animal Ark - \$11, at WPRM - \$8
- Regular Child admission at Animal Ark (3-12) - \$7.50, at WPRM (3-17) - \$4
- Offer \$2 - \$4 off combined ticket, do cross marketing or some joint media buys
- Have Animal Ark travelling program at events like Railroad Days and Pumpkin Trains
- Big Fish and Eugene Vicknair to execute with assistance from Charlie Spikes

RAL Package offer with Chalet View and Plumas Pine / Longboard's

- Discount on RAL when purchased with room stay
- Do cross marketing or some joint media buys
- Promote Chalet View and Plumas Pines on website
- Big Fish and Eugene Vicknair to execute

Additional Actions

Post on relevant online Event Calendars

- Sacramento Parent
- Bay Area Parent
- Plumas County.org
- Plumas News.com
- Feather River Properties
- County of Plumas
- See California
- Visit California
- Reno.com
- Visit Reno-Tahoe
- New to Reno.com
- This Is Reno.com

- SierraSun.com

Ensure that we are on California tourism websites like:

- Visit California
- Visit the USA (California section)
- California Tourist Guide
- Big Fish to execute

Ensure we are known to the following:

- California Tourism Program
- California Welcome Center in Truckee
- Local wedding and event planners
- Schools in Reno, Portola, Loyalton and Truckee areas
- Big Fish and Eugene Vicknair to execute

The estimated budget for this proposal is \$9,500, with a projected \$2,200 to come from specific event budgets (Pumpkin and Santa Trains, Light the Fire).

Budget authorization requested for this proposal is \$9,000 plus the budget for Big Fish and accounting for the \$1,585 already committed for the radio and RV guide.