

Rhode Island Commerce Corporation
Marketing & Reputation Management Committee

Public Session

Monday, September 22, 2014, 4:00 p.m.

Rhode Island Commerce Corporation

315 Iron Horse Way, Suite 101, Providence, RI

The following were in attendance:

Committee

Judith Diaz
Maeve Donohue
Elizabeth Francis

Presenters

Lisa Carnevale
Kristine Merz

Commerce RI Staff

Marcel Valois
Mike Blazek
Melissa Czerwein
Jennifer Howard

The meeting was called to order at 4:07 p.m.

Mrs. Czerwein stated that the purpose of the meeting was to keep the sub-committee updated on the progress of the Commerce RI marketing plan. She introduced Lisa Carnevale of MYRANDA Group and Kristine Merz of Orange Square, who are the consultants retained to create the plan.

The \$30,000 bid to create the tourism business plan was awarded to Nicholson Tourism in August, Mrs. Czerwein said. Commerce RI has worked with them in the past on a large strategic project. They have already completed a statewide comparison on where Rhode Island Tourism fits in New England and nationally with regards to spending and resulting revenue and market share. The analysis will be completed in mid-October.

Mrs. Czerwein also informed the committee that the final draft of the fact book is in final approvals. There was some discussion over how the book will be used within the overall

marketing strategy and the “Actions for Economic Development in Rhode Island” framework.

Mrs. Czerwein turned the meeting over to Ms. Carnevale and Ms. Merz for a presentation on their development of a marketing strategy thus far.

Ms. Merz said that Commerce RI does have a brand – defined as a person’s feeling about a product, service or organization. She said that the brand is Commerce RI and the product is Rhode Island as reflected on the organization’s websites. She asked what the sites are doing and how they are working.

Ms. Carnevale stressed the importance of differentiating the brand and the product as “the only” – as in “What are you the only of”. The answer to that question will determine the marketing message. Ms. Merz said that establishing this true difference will affect the feeling and decisions around the brand.

Ms. Carnevale said they are using the “Actions for Economic Development in Rhode Island” report as a guide for the overall strategy and to outline the goals of the project. She said there needs to be clarification and prioritization of the offering, target audience, competitive advantage and other factors. She said Commerce RI cannot be everything for everyone.

The corporation should start to target marketing messages to a target audience based on past accomplishments to gain more lead traction, advised Ms. Merz. She mentioned the example of the Small Business Loan Fund, which has served a specific audience that can define a specific and targeted database for marketing that specific product.

Ms. Carnevale said that position statements are based on who Commerce RI is and what Commerce RI does. These statements came from employee feedback in workshops where core values were identified and discussed; the core values came up strong, clear and consistent among the staff. Using the positioning statements, Mrs. Czerwein said, is the opportunity to launch and market Commerce RI and distinguish it from the Economic Development Corporation brand.

Mrs. Czerwein told the committee that the website request for proposals is public, and proposals will be reviewed by the end of the month. The website project will tie into the overarching marketing strategy and plan being drafted.

Mr. Valois noted that Commerce RI has two audiences and purposes: the first is retention, serving companies currently doing business in the state; and the second is acquisition, reaching out to companies looking for a location in the Northeast.

Ms. Carnevale told the committee that the next steps are to continue to obtain information on the brand and products then prioritize and clarify the target audience and offering based on that research. She welcomed feedback and input from the committee.

Before adjournment, Ms. Donohue made a motion to approve the minutes from the July 22nd meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Francis, and all were in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 5:06 p.m.

DRAFT