



Q&A: New Partnership Redefines Business Events in Niagara Falls

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A new partnership between Niagara Falls Tourism and the Scotiabank Convention Centre is redefining the relationship between meeting planners, venues, and destination partners. Introduced in early 2017, this collaboration sees the Scotiabank Convention Centre taking the lead on the tourist organization's former MC&IT program – a move aiming to generate more support for planners, while also attracting event-related business for venues, hotels, restaurants, and attractions throughout the iconic destination.

“The Scotiabank Convention Centre has become an important part of our tourism landscape,” said Noel Buckley, President and General Manager, Scotiabank Convention Centre, in a release to press. “Our partnership with Niagara Falls Tourism allows us to consolidate resources and strengthen Niagara Falls’ reputation in the business events world.”

For more about this unique partnership and how it will impact meeting and event planning, we reached out to Paula Racher, Account Director with Niagara Falls Business Events and the Scotiabank Convention Centre.

What does this partnership accomplish?

The product of this partnership means that we are now coordinating the business events component of Niagara Falls Tourism, which accounts for 10 per cent of all visitation to the city. Essentially my colleagues and I are brokers or intermediaries for the meetings-focused members of the tourist organization. As Account Directors, we each work within our own market segment to seek out organizations that can meet in Niagara Falls. A primary difference between us and the conventional broker would be that, while we are happy to help source the business and connect planners with our members, we don’t make the final sale. Actually, we match events with the members that will best serve them and then it’s up to those members to close the deal.

So you're a matchmaker in a sense?

Yes, and when we speak with clients, we aren't pointing them in any one direction. We are getting a sense of the meeting size, what they want to accomplish in Niagara Falls, and what their meeting requires to be successful. We work with clients to understand their vision and determine if they can include items – like a winery tour, a visit to the Falls, or a unique off-site experience – that will contribute to the overall success of their program. We then match those details to our members and provide planners with plenty of options. Planners then advise if we should approach all of those members on their behalf, or select only a few. Once a member receives an RFP (Request for Proposal), it is their decision whether or not to submit an offer based on their booking parameters.

Are you also representing the Scotiabank Convention Centre?

Yes. In our dual role, we represent both the destination and the Scotiabank Convention Centre (SCCN). The SCCN frequently partners with neighbouring hotels to provide a well-rounded proposal. While our state-of-the-art facility is one of the many fantastic options out there, it is the client who will determine the best venue(s) for their program. Our ultimate goal is to bring in more meetings and conventions to Niagara Falls. A win for the destination is also a win for the local community, who can benefit significantly from the positive economic impact of business events in our city.

How important is it for your team to stay informed on your meetings-focused members?

It's very important. We are fortunate to have members that continually improve their product and the challenge lies in keeping updated on these changes. Our team tries to meet with members regularly and we always have our ear to the ground. I love facilitating site inspections for meeting and event planners because it allows me to personally see what's new and improved in our destination. A fun aspect of Niagara Falls is that, if an event returns in consecutive years, planners and delegates get the chance to experience Niagara Falls in a different way each and every time.

Will this new arrangement allow for a stronger focus on business events?

Absolutely! By taking the lead on the business events component of Niagara Falls Tourism, we have more than doubled the size of our sales team. Each Account Director is able to concentrate on a defined market segment, allowing us to really dig into our own segments to develop the relationships that generate leads and business. Like our President and General Manager, Noel Buckley, once said, this kind of business opens more doors for Niagara Falls and helps it to mature as a true business events destination.

For more information on Niagara Falls Business Events, please visit www.fallsmetings.com.

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