

BHTA Quarterly General Meeting
Hilton Resort Sept 21st 2016
Prepared by Roseanne Myers
Chairman BHTA

Good morning distinguished ladies and gentlemen

Over the past three months we have tried to position the BHTA to be able to report positive results in our areas of priority focus. I want to acknowledge the members of the new board scattered around the room. We have indeed hit the ground running and set about cementing already strong public and private partner relationships through our courtesy visits with Ministries and private sector agencies. These were completed with the intent to walk away with at least 2 items that we can work on to bring benefit to the membership, not just to chat. The CEO Sue Springer will report the six major objectives identified and specifics of those actions completed or in progress in her comprehensive report.

Our advocacy efforts are our primary focal points as we try to ensure attention is brought to bear on a number of well ventilated matters, and this has provided opportunity to reengage members and involve them in a direct way to find solutions. We have had active involvement from our board in the three board meetings held so far and all external board positions have been allocated. I have learnt that several of our members are unaware or have forgotten some of the areas in which the BHTA can assist them so I want to remind you that the BHTA has representation on a number of

boards and it is important that members feed any issues they need dealt with via the secretariat and through to the board rep. We are also asking those board members to ensure that information and reports flow back through the organisation. The BHTA has representation on the following boards the NIS, TDC, BTPA, TVET council, NCC, BCSL to name a few so please make full use of them. Our interactions are not limited to those agencies and we will make representation in any sphere needed including assisting with collection of your VAT refunds so just please send us your thoughts and challenges and ideas to resolve them,

We have outlined a number of corporate governance and research initiatives but Mr. Jordan is seeking the assistance of some energetic persons to assist him on the finance committee so please indicate your interest and it provides an opportunity to learn more about the association and industry.

At this junction, I want to move away from the day to day and to focus on the bigger picture for the next few minutes as it helps us to prioritise the work of the association and in our own businesses. Taking a few days away from your business to immerse yourself in thought and surround yourself with information on what's new in the industry and what to expect and plan for is highly recommended. In-order to lead senior managers must spend a very large percentage of their time gathering and evaluating data and creating that vision for the organisation rather than just managing day to day.

Last week the CTO SOTIC conference, provided such an opportunity and I believe too few of us took the chance to engage with other global industry leaders in looking at the wider tourism sector to prepare and plan for today, tomorrow and the future.

What have we done right so far and what do we need to do to survive as part of the regional and global tourism landscape? What are our neighbors doing and what can we learn from others? It fits into the theme of our meeting today where we have asked five vibrant young minds to put together their own reflections and spin on what the BHTA and industry should be doing or should not be doing. Our stop, start or continue mantra. This is a part of our effort to capture the interest of our youth and get them interested in tourism by exposing the immensely talented younger folk among our ranks, who are following some non-traditional careers paths and giving them a platform to speak. I hope we can slowly change the perception and the familiar face of the sector, figuratively and literally.

Combined with the SOTIC conference was the several hours spent in the full social partnership meeting and there certainly is common ground. In both fora , as we listened to some of the perspectives from the speakers and participants some common themes arose that underlined the urgency to address some of the issues that are affecting our competitiveness as a region and certainly as an island. As an island we must look at what we can do to address the human resource issues facing us in this sector. Very worrying high absenteeism and low engagement. I am

challenging our HR committee to present approaches and a collective response after evaluating the data on absenteeism and engagement and relationship between the two and the socio economic impacts. Some of our members may be able to learn from others and regional counterparts. We must act.

With respect to service delivery and excellence Barbados has been a tourism leader in the region for many years and expectations are higher than other newbie destinations so we must try harder to address issues. Having attended SOTIC and listened to the Secretary General of the UNWTO speak about reorienting our approach to our people in the industry, a simple statement has stuck with me. He suggested that we must see persons working in this industry as "Ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen". Not new but nicely put. It has reinforced the need for us to remember the mutual respect we must demand and exhibit when staff interact with guests, senior managers, other colleagues and indeed property owners. The latter is a matter raised by the BWU and we committed to reinforce the need for mutual respect. Perhaps we should adopt this statement as our mantra." This industry is one of "Ladies and gentlemen serving ladies and gentlemen" Powerful in its simplicity. This emphasis could have a profound impact on the type of service given and received in some areas if there is buy in on both sides. Not new but nicely word-smithed.

Our vexing service gaps at the airport came into mind as we watched presentations from our neighbours on spanking new airports and jet bridges and ways to make the first

impression at the airport a “wow” and not a “woe”. We have to be unrelenting in our efforts to solve these known bugbears as we have been agitating on them for very long but complaints still have been experiencing some of the service excellence standards at various properties and must say that some of us are excellent but a number of us have lots of work to do. I urge our HR committee to develop the strategies we need to roll out to bring greater focus to this area. The level of service offered is directly affecting our competitiveness. The conference spoke to a sustainable ethical model for tourism and we are happy to have reconstituted and reenergized our Environmental committee and will relaunch our efforts in two specific areas – Renewable energy and the reduction of plastic, working jointly with other private sector leaders. Others have already done the latter. Thank you to those members who have volunteered to sit on this committee.

Another takeaway from the time spent was the concept of embracing our culture and suggestion that culture should take the lead in the tourism sector as persons seek authentic experiences. To this end as a start you will see us issue a survey that seeks to collect data on which of our members have live entertainment and examine what we need to do to adopt protocols that guide the interaction between member businesses and the cultural industries practitioners. We need to urge the entertainers and talent managers to form a coalition that allows us to easily sit around the table and discuss initiatives of mutual interest and benefit. A 2017 project for the BHTA and we understand the BTPA may already working on this issue.

The conference spoke about empowering to the community to get involved in tourism and this IS evidently already occurring as AirBNB an active participant in the sharing economy, reported that Barbadian families had hosted 13,000 visitors in their homes in 2015. An interesting development and one our BHTA partners can learn from as there are many areas where the level of satisfaction for their stay bettered a stay in the traditional sector. We will seek to share and study the data presented.

At the end of the day after such reflection and even though not new concepts it does provide added motivation to get things done in specific areas raised. One conclusion is perhaps that there is no place for the status quo and every day we need to look for ideas that challenge our thinking and disruptive strategies that challenge the way we do business and in the process wake us up to deal with some of the long standing issues that we have learnt to live with. Like the inefficiency of regional transportation. We now accept it as the butt of our jokes but are we laughing at our own calamities? BHTA will get involved where it can to urge solutions.

Enjoy the content of this meeting and we are happy that you are here with us today and hopefully will walk away challenging yourselves and your businesses to change strategies in-order to better your results. Thank you.