

WILLARD AIRPORT GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABLE AIR SERVICE ADVISORY
TASK FORCE
August 7, 2014

Time: 3:00-5:00 p.m.
Location: Bryan Room, Institute of Aviation

Members Present: Steve Carter (Chair), Tom Berns, Deb Busey, Lori Cowdrey Benso (via phone), Dorothy David, Jayne DeLuce, Mike DeLorenzo, William Dick, John Frasca, Gozen Hartman, Dick Helton, Bumsoo Lee, Dwight Miller (via phone), Alan Nudo, Laurel Prussing

Others Present: Bill Ferguson, David Foote, Karl Gnadt, Bruce Knight, Greg Principato, Jack Penning, Bruce Walden, Steve Wanzek

Members Absent: Seamus Reilly, Chris Schroeder, Dan Sholem, Bill Volk, Kristin Williamson

MEETING SUMMARY

1. Welcome and Call to Order

Steve Carter welcomed the group to the August meeting and provided a summary of topics to be discussed.

Mike DeLorenzo informed the group that he and Steve Carter had sent an invitation to attend a Task Force meeting to Congressman Rodney Davis. The congressman has responded and plans to attend a portion of the September meeting.

2. Strategic Options Review (Jack Penning, Consultant)

Jack Penning reviewed the feedback received for the strategic options discussed at the July meeting. The strategic options chosen by the Task Force members to be reviewed more extensively by Sixel Consulting are listed below in order of preference.

1. Management Structure
2. Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul
3. Land Development
4. Integration of Regional Assets
5. Parking Analysis

The focus will initially be on these five areas. Some items can be implemented fairly quickly once the recommendations are submitted and the Chancellor makes a decision on the recommendations for Willard Airport.

Questions from Task Force Members:

- Jayne DeLuce asked if internal advertising is part of the marketing strategy. Jack Penning responded yes, the marketing strategy does address marketing to the community, air service marketing to airlines companies and direct outreach. The strategy is contingent on determining a brand for Willard Airport.

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3. CMI Marketing Overview & Branding (Jack Penning, Consultant)

After discussing the feedback for the strategic options, Jack Penning provided an overview of the Strategic Marketing Plan for Willard Airport. He explained the marketing strategy is not only concerned with advertising and creating awareness of the airport and its services, but it is also focused on the life-cycle of the customer. The life-cycle of an airline customer begins at the start of travel preparation until well past when the trip is finished. This includes having targeted web advertising when the customer is researching, planning, and booking the flight; the passenger's experience in the terminal; and finally after the trip when the customer is sharing their travel experience with others. Jack also pointed out 'customer' not only includes a traveler, but employees of airlines, the airport tenants and airport's regional partners.

The objectives identified in earlier sessions are listed below. Each of these objectives will be integrated into the main marketing program goals. The recommended marketing tactics are based around these goals in order to best meet the identified client objectives.

Program Objectives:

- Fill empty seats: Increase overall passenger enplanements and load factors.
To meet this objective, the percentage for passenger leakage needs to decrease and inbound passenger numbers increased.
- Land additional airline service by increasing interest in the airport.
- Focus on air service development and on customers – potential and current.
- Identification of unique brand characteristics and the brand's position and promise.

Strategic Marketing Goals:

- Goal #1: Identify and develop airport brand platform and promise
- Goal #2: Enhance air service options and awareness
- Goal #3: Increase awareness to drive travelers
- Goal #4: Develop partnerships/community outreach
- Goal #5: Sustain air service and increase enplanements
- Goal #6: Enhance and target brand communications
- Goal #7: Enhance airport passenger experience
- Goal #8: Increase passenger-driven airport revenue
- Goal #9: Increase Perception of airport as a regional asset

Sixel Consulting recommends initially focusing on the core market in the airport's catchment area. After the increased use creates the need for additional service, then begin focusing on the larger region to gain additional passengers. Suggested marketing methods include traditional methods such as radio, print, and T.V. ads; online marketing using

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search engine optimization (SEO) on Google, Expedia and Travelocity to focus the advertising to the core catchment area; local sponsorships and promotional events at the university's sporting events and at community events; social media integration and enhancement on websites such FourSquare, Yelp, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc.; and website enhancements to Willard's website, FlyCMI.com, that include a booking agent, travel calculator, and other customer-friendly features.

Proposed Budget for Marketing

Jack provided a quick summary of the proposed \$175,000 budget provided in the marketing plan report. This would include at least one new staff position dedicated to marketing and public relations responsibilities. He explained a person making connections throughout the core catchment area, networking with people at community events and making sure the airport has a positive presence on social media is essential to having a successful marketing plan.

Partnerships and Community Outreach

One cost effective way to market in the region is to partner with the community organizations that already work on outreach. These are organizations that already have a presence in the area and can help facilitate increasing awareness about the airport and its services.

Jack explained how a corporate travel outreach program is another way to create awareness of Willard Airport with local customers. This could include advertising business travel incentives and being a marketing advocate to the local companies for the airlines carriers in the area. Examples of incentives for companies to promote the airport include free parking or flight discounts from airlines. The local travel agents should be informed of any promotions and packages available to the corporations. Jack provided examples of corporate outreach at other airports. He stated the incentives also provide a way for the community businesses and local governments to feel connected to the airport.

Alan Nudo commented on the airline loyalty programs and how some of these incentives could be used by local companies to promote business travel through Willard Airport.

Gozen Hartman stated a marketing campaign alone should increase airport usage since it has been nonexistent in the recent past. Jack Penning agreed and sited an example of a regional airport that also had remarkable success with a new marketing campaign because of the limited community awareness of the airport's services.

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Illustrating the economic value of the airport

Jack Penning explained how the marketing campaign should also educate the consumer on the economic impact of the airport and its importance for the region. The airport has been shown to affect millions of dollars in the local economy. Jack also noted this is a secondary goal of the marketing campaign.

Monitor Current Service and Trends

There has been limited reporting of the current service comparisons and trends that may affect the consumer's use of Willard Airport. These include the comparison of flight rates with the airport rates in the region and monitoring the amount of traffic during certain events such as university homecoming, spring break or a locally hosted event. Jack Penning stated these statistics could help direct the focus of the marketing campaign.

Reward employees for positive performance

Create an incentive program to reward airport employees for meeting specific levels of positive customer service. Develop a way to provide an incentive when an employee assists in solving specific customer concerns. One example Jack provided is when employees respond to concerns customers express on social media.

Task Force Feedback

- Bill Dick stated he did not believe using free parking as a reward for frequent travel should be an incentive for travelers who already use Willard Airport. Jack Penning agreed and stated these marketing incentives would be targeted toward travelers who are not currently Willard Airport users.
- Alan Nudo commented a frequent user should have some type of incentive regardless of whether they have been a past user or a new user.
- Gozen Hartman and Jayne DeLuce both commented on how past marketing campaigns did not provide answers to the feedback received by customers. Previous campaigns have only focused on advertising.
- Bruce Knight agreed with Gozen and Jayne saying this appears to be more of a regional public relations campaign instead of just a marketing campaign.
- Steve Carter commented it is unlikely there will be an immediate \$175,000 to implement this marketing strategy. Steve questioned if the goals and steps listed have been prioritized in order to work on a limited funds basis. Jack Penning explained that once a dollar amount for marketing is known, then Sixel Consulting can customize the marketing plan to the amount available. Jack also stated the new brand and how the new brand is unveiled to the public is the main priority. The second priority is to have a person dedicated to being a public relations advocate for the airport on social media and at community events networking with the public.

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Developing a Brand

Jack Penning shifted the discussion to creating a new brand for Willard Airport. He explained this is an important priority because the brand will be used in each portion of the marketing strategy. The top four brands created based on the feedback received through the focus groups and through previous discussions during Task Force meetings include the following:

- Fly Campaign
- Champaign Airport
- FlyCMI
- University of Illinois Airport

Gozen Hartman asked if there is anything that should be considered when comparing the brands. Jack Penning responded saying there are obstacles including the awareness of the airport's location and surroundings.

Bill Dick questioned why FlyCMI was considered one of the top four brands. It was explained the feedback showed this a being one of the options people felt could be used.

Bruce Knight and Jack Penning discussed the idea of how Champaign is or is not a 'metro' area, which is part of one of the possible brands listed by the focus groups. Jack explained the term 'metro' counters the brand or marketing campaign that would try to develop the idea that the airport is close to home and easy to use for travel.

Task Force members were instructed to email their top three choices of the brand options to Andrea Fain by next Friday, August 15.

4. Meeting Summary & Next Steps (David Foote, Consultant)

David Foote explained the Strength, Opportunity, Weaknesses, Challenges (SWOC) analysis during the next Task Force meeting. There will then be discussion about the priorities of the five elements to list which should be implemented first. The final strategic plan will be presented and discussed at the October meeting with all the details, including costs.

It is possible there will also be some mock ups of the new brand and taglines at the September meeting.

5. Comments or Questions

6. Next Meeting: 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., September 4, 2014