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## Interview with Janice Woodson

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## INTERVIEW WITH JANICE WOODSON

BY

DAVID GROVES

### ABSTRACT

Janice Woodson is Tourist Project Manager with the Phoenix and Valley of the Sun Convention and Visitors Bureau. In her interview she provides a perspective of a convention and visitors bureau that has matured as the Phoenix area has grown into one of the ten major metropolitan areas in the United States. The basic element of the success of the Phoenix Convention and Visitors Bureau has been its dedication to quality services and products. The other major dimension in the success of the Convention and Visitors Bureau has been community support.

### INTERVIEW WITH JANICE WOODSON

**QUESTION I:** What has been one of the major problems in development of the Phoenix and Valley of the Sun area into a major convention and tourism destinations?

**ANSWER:** One of the biggest problems has been the cost of advertising and marketing. In today's market to keep the growth potential and compete requires new, creative methods of financing. One of the methods that we are exploring is one in which certain products and services from the area are bartered through a brokerage system into advertisement and promotional dollars. This is a system in which brokerage firms can parlay soft dollars into promotional advertising. This has been tried in some communities such as Las Vegas and has worked well to help reduce cost and generate additional budget dollars.

**QUESTION II:** What has been one of the major reasons for the success of the Phoenix Convention and Visitors Bureau and the successful growth in conventions/tourism?

**ANSWER:** One of the reasons that we think the convention bureau has matured is that each stage of its growth has been well thought out and developed. Further, our member properties focus on and are dedicated to quality services and product. Facilities have not outgrown demand and have been kept in proportion. For an area to develop into a major convention destination they must have the best possible tourist lodging, entertainment, and eating facilities.

**QUESTION III:** During Phoenix's growth period, were there any problems in regard to development into a national convention area?

**ANSWER:** The primary problem was overcoming the idea that Phoenix is not

a major metropolitan area with associated services. This was overcome by a good marketing and sales program coupled with familiarization programs; that is, getting people here to visit to realize the nature and character of the Phoenix area.

QUESTION IV: What has been the primary uniqueness that has sold the Phoenix area in terms of its convention facilities?

ANSWER: The primary attraction in the Phoenix area has been the climate. Individuals from the northeast and midwest; where the winters are hard, see this as a prime area to escape these harsh conditions.

QUESTION V: What is the planning process utilized to achieve success in the Phoenix area?

ANSWER: The process that was used was selective development with a dedication to long-range planning. Long-range instead of short range outcomes were the focus with particular segments being worked on intensively over a long period of time. The policy board that we have worked with has been made up of experts who have helped us make sound planning decisions. In many communities, those who are in policy making positions are appointed on the basis of politics, not expertise. This is a very important aspect of successful marketing. Another important factor has been the community support and its dedication to quality services and products. This sense of community has helped the bureau develop a sense of "esprit-de-corps." The quality services has helped sustain a high return rate. Conscientious planning and growth that set boundaries allow for the convention and visitors bureau to be well integrated into the range of community services.

QUESTION VI: In what type of community will a long range planning model work?

ANSWER: It will work in most communities where planning resources are limited and the philosophy is conservative. There are two important elements to its success: 1. A sound marketing strategy is extremely important to attracting clientele. 2. Community support is essential to achieve successful results.

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