

From Bean to Cup

This “life-changing” experience brought the power of purpose to life and moved employees to respect and advocate for their organization.



About the Client

Our client partner is a major beverage retailer operating in 60 countries, with approximately 9,405 company-operated stores as well as 8,661 licensed stores.

In order to incentivize their top performers with an experience they could learn and teach others about, they asked Creative Group to design a group incentive travel program that would generate brand ambassadors. We have been partnering with this client across a range of programs since 2004.

The Challenge

The Origin Experience program is an immersive, coffee-education trip that gives key partners the chance to experience coffee from plant to cup, and drive home the company’s commitment to socially equitable and sustainable business practices.

The Experience was driven by two objectives: To educate high-achieving partners on the “first ten feet” of the coffee journey; and to produce a once-in-a-lifetime experience, creating brand ambassadors who bring the company’s story to life in their day-to-day operations, ultimately building brand loyalty with employee partners and customers.

Because this trip was centered on the coffee journey, it represented a real logistics management challenge, as the places visited were working farms and mills, in non-tourist areas. Special consideration was taken with regard to the vehicles, foods, bathroom facilities and the routes taken to each location. Much of the program used local workers as well.



Creative Group helped a major beverage retailer increase brand loyalty through an employee advocacy program.

The Solution

The development and execution of this program was entirely unique, driven by the Costa Rica origin location, its farms, mills, people and culture. Throughout the five-day event, participants visited five farms, a co-op and a mill where the hulling, polishing, cleaning, sorting and grading of the coffee bean takes place. Partners had the opportunity to experience coffee harvesting techniques from picking and milling, to drying and ultimately bulk packaging. The majority of the education took place in the fields and the mills, in natural settings, to further the understanding of the climate and laborious task of coffee production – and to foster an emotional attachment to the product and the client brand.

The activities we designed included:

- A Coffee Picking Contest created to help partners understand the importance of competent pickers who get the best and most cherries (fruit of the coffee plant)
- Coffee Planting, enabling participants to leave their footprint on the land for years to come
- A Teach-Back, in which participants teamed up to share their unique experiences and demonstrate how they planned to bring this information back to their communities, in tandem with the formation of an Origin Alumni group designed to drive post-event advocacy
- Painting a local school and playground fence, a CSR activity further immersing partners in the local culture and community and underlining the client’s desire to be a force for positive action
- Social Media – participants were provided with iPads nightly, so they could share their Origin Experience with families, friends and the client community in general
- A Farewell Dinner with the complete surprise of having the client’s senior leadership team – including their chairman and CEO – in attendance to share the experience

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The Outcome

Partners on this Origin trip experienced their employer’s commitment to C.A.F.E. (Coffee and Farmer Equity) practices first hand by working with coffee growers who implement socially and environmentally responsible practices. These participant remarks tell the story:

“I’m moved by the tenacity, loyalty and dedication of those who embody “the first ten feet.” Their efforts are a solid reminder of why every detail, every drink, every customer, every bean matters. I hope that as a company we can continue to value the human interactions that set us apart from our competitors.”

“This experience has been life changing for me personally and at work. I am even prouder to be a partner and feel very blessed to be part of such an amazing company.”

“I’ve NEVER been more proud to work for this company. I knew we had integrity as a company but had no idea the extent to how we purchase our coffee, work with the farmers, impact coffee quality!”