Managing The Swells Of Change

Sailing into high gear with solid solutions

About the Client

Our client is a global leader in cloud infrastructure and digital workspace technology, aiming to accelerate digital transformation for IT environments, with a sales force of more than 10,000.

The Challenge

Our client hosts an annual incentive trip for their top 500 salespeople, plus guests, each year. These elite performers are deserving – and expecting – an exceptional travel experience.

Having created and executed this incentive travel program for over 10 years, we needed to design a fresh and relevant experience that would motivate the sales team to reach its goals and foster brand loyalty for the company. Having traveled to Dubai, Hawaii and Mexico on previous group incentives, we decided to do something different by creating a five-night sailing experience in the South of France. Our sailing itinerary was scheduled to depart from Monte Carlo, Monaco and head to St. Tropez, France and Portofino, Livorno and Rome, Italy.

The planning of all activities was finalized, when 35 days before sailing we received a call from the Monaco government eliminating our option of docking but giving us the opportunity to anchor offshore. The reason for the move was the unexpected growth of the electric Grand Prix that overlapped with our stay.

This change would require tendering 1,000 people for activities and for the off-site gala event. The math alone was a disaster. Due to the number of tenders available, it would have taken 3.5 hours to transport 1,000 people in one direction. And in the event of high winds, they wouldn't even be operational. For these reasons, this change became unworkable for our group and we sailed into high gear to find a solution.

The Solution

After working tirelessly with all parties to come up with the most advantageous solution, we presented the entire scenario to the client. The solution consisted of shifting our sailing pattern from Monte Carlo to St. Tropez to allow for proper docking and then changing our activities and the gala event date.

With some solid negotiating, we arranged a date change with the gala venue that incurred no additional fees, including a Sunday load-in and load-out (which was challenging due to street closures on weekends in Monte Carlo). We were also able to negotiate a date change with the gala evening talent, Seal, including travel changes with no additional fees incurred other than travel costs.

Lastly, we reworked the activities for 1,000 people from Monte Carlo to St. Tropez including a waiver of all cancellation fees. The new activities included everything from Wine tastings to tours of Grimaud, Port Grimaud and the peninsula hilltop villages.

The program of events was also rewritten and printed (within 72 hours!) in order to get the final program communications out to all attendees by the established due date.

This change required collaboration with a host of agencies, including the Monaco government, the port authorities (in Monaco and St. Tropez), and the cruise company. We also worked closely with our DMC partner in Monaco, tour operators and transportation providers, our gala venue, and our talent agency and production crew to adjust all the logistical details to support an exceptional program.

The Outcome

We were praised by our client and various partners for our swift action, attention to detail, and our unwavering focus on finding a strong solution.

"First off, I want to say THANK YOU for everything that you did to make the show and the overall program such a great success. As we debriefed, we were raving about how great it was to work with you and how effortlessly you handled what could have been a devastating hurdle in planning the program. The way you approached it and worked with everyone to present a solution was exactly the kind of leadership and vision that was needed in such a difficult situation. Please know that it was certainly noticed by everyone that had the pleasure of working with you."

35 days before sailing, we lost our docking rights.