

Anchorage CVB Changes Identity to Visit Anchorage

By Jonathan Trager

Anchorage has become the latest CVB to follow an industry-wide trend, changing its name to a more customer-friendly moniker.

The switch from the Anchorage CVB to Visit Anchorage was announced on Dec. 15 during the bureau's annual membership luncheon. The organization has been in business for 36 years.

"Visit Anchorage instantly identifies our industry and business," said Julie Sauepe, Visit Anchorage President & CEO. "Anchorage Convention & Visitors Bureau is a mouthful – Visit Anchorage saves seven syllables and is much easier to say."

New publications and ads produced by the organization will carry the Visit Anchorage name. The cost of changing the signage and ordering new letterhead and business cards is "easily less than \$25,000," Sauepe said.

The city's brand—Big Wild Life—remains central to all Visit Anchorage's

marketing campaigns and sales efforts.

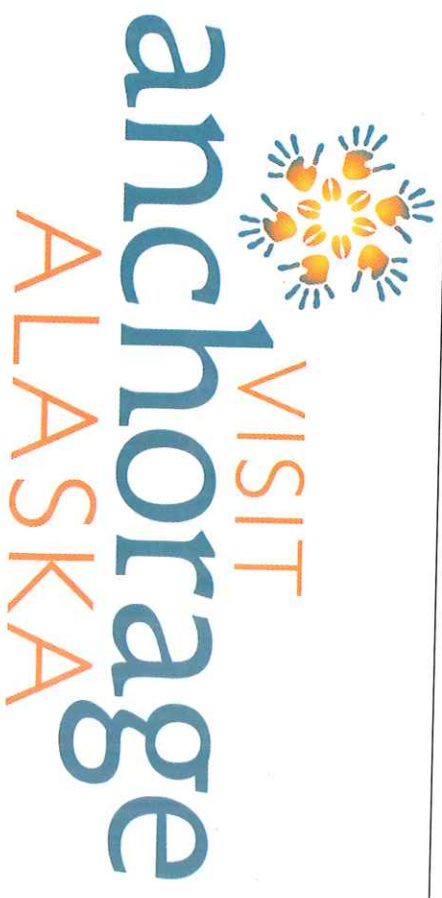
Sauepe said two factors primarily drove the change.

The first is a re-launch of the organization's website, which will take place within the next month. The new name will help optimize search engine performance, Sauepe said.

Second, the revamped identity will help distinguish the organization from the Chamber of Commerce and other governmental groups.

In conversations with other organizations through Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI), Sauepe said she was encouraged that the transition would be smooth. She also learned the switch would improve public understanding of the role of a destination-marketing organization.

The Anchorage CVB then floated the idea at a board retreat in April and found the members to be receptive, she said. Final approval of the name change was given in mid-November.



Sauepe says she's also pleased with the organization's altered logo.

"What we've done with the logo, it's not a big switch, but it really incorporates fully the elements of our city brand logo," Sauepe said. "We took the opportunity to create a logo in the same family that includes the word Alaska and our sales staff is excited to have that."

Other organizations that have made a similar change include the San Francisco CVB (changed to San Francisco Travel); the Orlando CVB (changed to Visit Orlando), and Grand Rapids CVB (changed to Experience Grand Rapids).

More on the change may be found at Anchorage.net/name.

ESPA Gearing up for First Annual under New Branding

By Rebecca Keister

The Event Services Professionals Association is looking forward to increased attendance and amped up networking at its first annual conference since rebranding earlier this year from the Association for Convention Operations (ACOM).

"We're actually pretty excited about this year," Eric Blanc, CMP, President, ESPA, told USAE. "We're looking forward to providing some really good programming this year. One of the main goals of our association has always been to learn from members and provide opportunities to learn and network."

ESPA's annual meeting happens Jan. 6-8 at the U.S. Grant Hotel in San Diego, Calif., immediately preceding the Professional Convention Management Association's (PCMA) annual meeting with which it annually co-locates.

ESPA rebranded itself last October to better define itself as a group representing all industry personnel. The change also involved a new logo to reflect the "strategic direction" the associated initiated

at the beginning of 2011 after reviewing its membership demographic and to go along with its new mission of "elevating the event and convention services profession and to better educate its members."

One factor was a stagnant membership that, in the last few years of economic turmoil, has resulted in a decline in annual meeting attendance.

Last year's co-location with PCMA in Las Vegas, Nev. was an unfortunate example of that trend. Registration so far this year is up 16 percent, which is especially encouraging, Blanc said, because it's once again a West Coast event.

"Typically they've legged a little because the majority of our membership is a little bit further of a travel distance. Numbers [last year] weren't where we wanted them to be," he said. "Part of that was Vegas. A lot of our organizations depend on public for funding and just with the amount of negative press from the Administration and Congress, it made it difficult for a lot of our members to make it."

Tacoma's Tammy Blount to Lead Monterey (Calif.) CVB

By Jonathan Trager

Tammy Blount, FCDME, is leaving the Tacoma (Wash.) Regional CVB as President & CEO to head up the Monterey County CVB.

She starts her new job on Feb. 1 after leading the Tacoma CVB for four years. Blount replaces former chief John Reyes, who resigned earlier this year and now is Executive Vice President at San Francisco Travel.

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There, Blount will lead a \$5 million bureau with just over 20 full-time em-

ployees.

"[Monterey] is just one of those places that has always been attractive to me," she told USAE. "It's an extraordinary opportunity to join a great community."

Though not as well-known as Sonoma or Napa, Monterey is the third-largest destination in terms of vineyard acreage and has great appeal to wine connoisseurs, Blount said.

The coastal county boasts the Monterey Bay Aquarium, which holds 35,000 animals and 550 species of marine wildlife.

Blount serves as the Chair of the Washington Tourism Alliance, the group founded in the wake of the closing of the state tourism office earlier this year. It has taken over the state's destination-marketing assets and launched its own campaign.

"It's been a huge learning curve but really inspiring to be part of the team that's shaping the new direction for Washington tourism," she said. "I have every faith

they're going to do some great stuff."

During her tenure, Blount helped double the Tacoma organization's resources to \$1.8 million. She's also proud of striking partnerships with other local groups.

She began her career with Tourism Vancouver, where she worked for 11 years.

Blount then headed to Texas to work in the home-building industry managing a sales team before returning to the Pacific Northwest in 2007.

She was awarded DMAI Regional Champion in 2010, won the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber "Popham Award" in 2011, and was a finalist in "Best Places to Work" in 2010 and 2011. Blount enjoys playing the guitar and golfing but laughs when she said she does both "very badly."

"I'm sad to leave friends in Washington and excited to make new ones in Monterey County," she said. Dave Nolan of Horizon Hospitality As-

from the whole process that they can take home with them," Blanc said.

ESPA also is aiming to rev up its meeting networking segment, putting a focus on regional networking by hosting a "Regional Networking/Icebreaker Session" that will feature an as-yet-unnamed game.

"We're trying to make it a little easier for folks to meet and learn from people who are closest to them. A positive part of networking is being in an area where people can relate to your situation," Blanc said.

Other networking opportunities will include an informal gathering at a local nightlife venue, a luncheon with meeting planners and CSWs from across North America, a welcome reception on the conference's first night, and a networking buffet breakfast on its first full day.

There also are several options for sightseeing excursions and the chance to give back through the ESPA Beach Clean-Up, happening Friday afternoon prior to the conference's start, in which members can partner with a local parks department to assist in a beach cleanup.



Tammy Blount, FCDME

sociates conducted the search for the Monterey County CVB.