



CAROL WALLACE, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE SAN DIEGO CONVENTION CENTRE



AIPC MEMBERS SPEAK

TOUGH FISCAL TIMES PROMPT INNOVATIVE MARKETING CHANGES IN SAN DIEGO

CAROL WALLACE

SAN DIEGO CONVENTION CENTRE

San Diego has a reputation as one of the world's most beautiful convention and meeting destinations. The **San Diego Convention Center Corporation (SDCCC)** has added to this package by providing superior customer service which has made us a top pick among meeting planners and convention travellers from around the globe.

Our ongoing success, however, requires us to continue to find new and innovative ways to fulfill our mission. In 2004, budget constraints and conflicting roles and responsibilities led to a decision by the City of San Diego to shift all sales and marketing for the Convention Center to the SDCCC.

The majority of U.S. convention facilities - some 87 percent - are owned by government municipalities. Nearly all receive public funding; which is considered a wise investment given the enormous economic impact, tax revenues from tourism or hotel room night taxes and redevelopment benefits that convention facilities often provide. The City of San Diego helped launch the development and expansion of the convention center and

created the Convention Center Corporation to operate, manage and market the building. Since opening in 1989, the Center has become one of the region's most powerful economic engines generating billions of dollars in economic impact, helping spur the redevelopment of downtown San Diego and pumping more than \$270 million in tax revenues that pay for essential city services.

From the time the Convention Center opened, the Center and the Bureau had a shared role in selling and marketing the building. In reality, this split responsibility didn't work as the building had separate sales teams in separate locations operating at cross purposes and often duplicating activities. In 1995, the separate sales teams were combined in one location with joint reporting responsibilities to both organizations. When the City officially transferred responsibility to the Center for its entire marketing operation in 2004, it came as no surprise. The decision by the City was a final step to make one organization accountable while increasing efficiencies, providing the Center team with more control over business

decisions impacting the facility and to save the City money.

Today, the Center is among the first facilities in the U.S. to be fully responsible for marketing and selling itself, and we have complete autonomy to make business decisions that directly influence our revenues and long-term strategic planning. Other cities have adopted similar models. For clients, it has meant greater efficiency and superior service, since prior to the change customers worked with staff from both organizations creating duplication of responsibilities and confusion about who handled what responsibilities.

In an increasingly competitive marketplace, innovation and customer service will be critical, and we believe that San Diego's new model gives us a significant advantage in both these respects.

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