

Case Study: Building the Ultimate VIP Reward Trip

Thoughtful details elevated an incentive trip to an ultra-luxury experience

BY JT LONG

Editor's Note

How do you keep top performers motivated in a world that has become acclimated to luxury hotels and great service? Smart Meetings asked Damian Renteria, senior event planner with the outsourced sales company Cydcor for the story behind what will now be an annual incentive trip.

Event Goal

Chairman's Club is designed to reward and celebrate the achievements of a very select group of top performers. Only the top 15 percent of sales managers received invitations—about 75 people plus one guest each. That feeling of ultra-exclusivity is designed to evoke pride for those who earn invitations to a fantasy trip, so it had to be an irresistible incentive to drive next-level sales performance where people compete for the opportunity to attend.

Biggest Challenge

The greatest obstacle was making this VIP event feel luxurious and unique. In the past, attendance and engagement had tapered off for some larger, more recreational events. The team had to pull out all the stops to create a dream getaway worthy of the exceptionally high bar set for attendees and the immense effort they would have to put forth to earn those invitations.

There was a risk in creating such a limited-invite event. The company did not want to leave the impression that it was trying to cut costs



when the goal was quite the opposite. To allay any misconceptions, the emphasis was on surprising, delighting and pampering guests.

Solution

Step one was finding the right location. Unico 20°87° Riviera Maya, a five-star, boutique, all-inclusive resort in Mexico, fit the bill. The luxurious adults-only resort featured ocean-view rooms that included private balconies with soaking tubs. Unlike many all-inclusive resorts, this venue served a la carte dinners only, at a variety of elegant restaurants, rather than mass buffets. Attendee rooms included



access to 24-hour, all-inclusive room service, and each came with its own local host, and a dedicated concierge to handle a guest's needs, not to mention custom aromatherapy and a pillow menu. The resort even included unlimited access to a full menu of services at the spa for a small service fee.

Memorable personal touches included Bluetooth speakers sent to invitees a week before the event, along with personalized letters from Cydcor's CEO, to help generate anticipation. The parade of gifts continued at the event, with welcome cocktails and event-branded resort tank tops handed out at the welcome reception. That was followed by



brand-name backpacks, tumblers and towels delivered to guests' rooms.

The company also covered a local excursion trip for each guest, which included jungle ziplines, dolphin swims, sailboat cruises and snorkeling adventures. While past Cydcor events have balanced relaxation and recreation with business meetings, this event was all play, all day. Attendees participated in beach Olympics, a massive pool party and a formal dinner celebration. To drive the message home that this event was truly one of a kind, the Cydcor team branded the event end-to-end, including a custom logo, messaging and signage.

Focal Point

An over-the-top dinner gala, featuring a nautical theme, celebrated consultants who have been with the business for 20 years or more. Guests enjoyed a catered dinner, a DJ and an open bar, in addition to fire dancers and other entertainment. The big "wow" moment came when each consultant was awarded either a \$4,000 watch or an ultra-high-end designer handbag.

Success Measurement

In a post-event survey, 100 percent of respondents gave the hotel 5 out of 5 stars and across the board, respondents rated the event as near perfect, giving it a 4.8 out of 5 stars.

Lessons learned

The biggest takeaway was that trying something new requires a lot of clear communication—and it's critical to get the details right. Months prior to the event, the team sent out emails defining the criteria for invitees to be chosen and to ensure everyone understood that the trip was a reward for only those who achieved the very highest performance standards.

Extra thought and planning for even the finest details, such as event branding, gifting and perks, added an air of exclusivity and celebrity treatment.