



**Civic
Consulting**
alliance

21 S. Clark St.
Suite 4301
Chicago, IL 60603
(312) 853-9160
www.ccachicago.org

Boosting Tourism through Focus, Inquiry and Action

It's hard to overstate the importance of tourism to Chicago's collective well-being. Forty-eight million visitors pump billions of dollars into our economy annually, creating more than 100,000 jobs and \$800 million in tax revenue. Tourism matters ... to all of us.

Which is why any city should regularly take honest stock of how well it promotes itself to the rest of the world. In the last few years, Chicago has done precisely that. Important questions have been asked and answered. Action has been taken and changes made. The results are seen in the energy and spirit of the two-year old Choose Chicago organization and in the upticking tourism statistics. By virtually any measure, Chicago has rebounded from a stagnant tourism spell.

This did not happen by accident. It happened because leaders across the city worked together and committed to taking action. Civic Consulting Alliance was part of this journey, bringing private sector expertise and resources to the table of collective civic improvement.

Challenge

The recession that began in 2008 devastated tourism everywhere. But where other cities began to see their numbers move upward as the economy rebounded, Chicago's numbers had stagnated. What had been 46 million visitors to Chicago in 2007 had fallen to 39 million visitors by 2010. Something wasn't right.

Concerned about the trend lines, the city's tourism leaders began a process of examination and reflection. Important questions were asked. What are other cities doing? Do we have the right message and marketing strategy? Are we investing enough money? How should we structure the organization responsible for promoting our city?

Action

To get the ball rolling, Don Welsh, then-CEO of the Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau, asked Civic Consulting Alliance to analyze the tourism efforts of other cities around the country. Working with Griffin Strategic Advisors, Civic Consulting Alliance examined 11 U.S. cities and found that other cities were investing more resources in tourism. Trends were identified: for example, cities like New York City were making significant inroads with international visitors, by far the most lucrative traveler segment. The investigation also uncovered some of the advantages of having a unified tourism office, whereas Chicago tourism efforts had been managed by a few different organizations.

Next, the Mayor's Office convened a steering committee of top leaders across all sections of the tourism industry, with staffing from Civic Consulting Alliance. The committee was charged with finding workable solutions to improve Chicago's tourism performance. Among the group's main recommendations was a call to unify the two principal tourism bodies under a single office. In early 2012, Mayor Emanuel announced that the Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau and the Chicago Office of Tourism and Culture would be consolidated into a newly branded organization called Choose Chicago. The consolidation was supported by Civic Consulting Alliance, McKinsey & Company, and Jones Day, and brought new strategic focus and increased funding to the City's efforts to promote itself.

Other projects followed. Civic Consulting Alliance performed market analysis supporting the Mayor's announcement of specific tourism goals to achieve by 2020. The Boston Consulting Group led a detailed benchmarking study of ten international cities to determine what type of attraction mix was needed. Adam Helman and Suzanne Campion helped the City reexamine its cultural tourism strategy and find ways to promote Chicago's neighborhoods. McKinsey & Company examined long-range funding options to support continued investments.

Results

As a unified entity, Choose Chicago was a shot-in-the-arm to the city's tourism mojo. There's

a new energy and focus in promoting our great city. More resources are being applied to a more strategic and social media-rich marketing effort. Significant tourism projects, such as the Chicago Riverwalk development and citywide lighting framework plan, were informed and inspired by the initial examinations into what kind of attractions would help bring people to the city.

Today, tourism numbers have rebounded. In 2013, tourism rose to 48 million visitors and the trend lines are heading north. Tens of thousands of jobs are being created. Millions of dollars in tax revenues are being generated and invested in services benefiting all Chicagoans.

A lot can be accomplished when a bit of focus, inquiry, and action are applied to a civic endeavor. Civic Consulting and our partners are proud to have played a part.

Partners

Adam Helman

American Association of Advertising Agencies

The Boston Consulting Group

Griffin Strategic Advisors, LLC

Jones Day

Kellogg School of Management

McKinsey & Company

Suzanne Campion