

CHAPTER III: MARKETING THE OREGON COAST

The Oregon coast's communities should launch a collaborative campaign to market the Oregon coast as a great place to do knowledge-based business.

At present, most marketing for the Oregon coast focuses on tourism marketing. Tourism marketing raises the Oregon coast's profile as a destination for travel and recreation. That kind of advertising, however, does not target entrepreneurs who could be enticed to relocate their business to a rural setting with a good climate and spectacular scenery. Around the United States, a number of "high-amenity" rural areas like the Oregon coast have diversified their economy by marketing their region as attractive places to live and work.



Looking to the Silicon Forest

The Oregon coast is not as remote as many rural regions. Many of our communities are an hour and a half drive (or less) from the I-5 corridor. And, let us remember, the I-5 corridor is the major north-to-south interstate highway (and rail corridor) on the West coast of North America.

The Silicon Forest, which hugs the I-5 corridor in Oregon, is a technology hub of global importance. There are reports that the Silicon Forest is running out of room. The Oregon coast is a logical place to carry out some activities that occur in the Silicon Forest. Greater ties to the Silicon Forest would boost the Oregon coast's economy and enhance the offerings of the Silicon Forest. It is a win-win for both areas.

To promote greater ties, leaders from coastal communities should reach out to the business community along the I-5 corridor. We can engage decision-makers in the Silicon Forest in person about these opportunities, invite them to establish a presence on the Oregon coast, and seek out speaking engagements at Chamber of Commerce meetings in places like Hillsboro and Corvallis (the heart of the Silicon Forest). We can also approach organizations like the Oregon Software Association and ask how we can engage technology companies about establishing partnerships in coastal communities.

A number of entrepreneurs from high profile technology companies already spend time on the Oregon coast. With broadband, these executives and their employees can lengthen the time they spend on the Oregon coast.

In late August 2005, telephone contact was made with David Lawrence, the Deputy City Manager of Hillsboro, Oregon. The City of Hillsboro is at the epicenter of the Silicon Forest. David Lawrence knows many of the key people in that area very well. After all, Hillsboro is

home to Intel and a number of other high tech companies. David was briefed about the Oregon Coast Telecommunications Economic Development Strategy. David was very enthusiastic about the Project. He said, “What you are talking about makes a lot of sense. I think it will work. You may be setting something into motion where you cannot imagine what the impacts will be for the Oregon coast.” This fall, during the early implementation phase of the Oregon Coast Telecommunications Economic Development Strategy, David Lawrence will serve as a point of contact to arrange meetings between coastal leaders and community and business leaders from the Silicon Forest. The preliminary plan is to hold a meeting or meetings in both the heart of the Silicon Forest and on the Oregon coast. So, shortly after this report has been released, OCZMA will be seeking volunteers from the Oregon coast (local government leaders, economic development professionals, and others) to participate in these liaison efforts with leaders in the Silicon Forest.

Looking Outside of Oregon For Partnerships

A coastwide marketing strategy for the Oregon coast should also target major technology hubs from outside our region, places like Phoenix, Denver, San Francisco, and Southern California. These “overheated” regions are choking with traffic and the price of doing business there is becoming prohibitive. As we launch a marketing campaign for the Oregon coast, we should be selective and only target the cream of the crop of these entrepreneurs.



Entrepreneurs from outside our region tell us the Oregon coast is not on the radar screens of many people. That should not surprise us. Have we tried to engage them?

Charles Brunetti, from Denver, Colorado, a contributor of ideas to this strategy, commented, “The Oregon coast is a jewel. If people in the technology world knew about the Oregon coast—and, that there is adequate bandwidth—some of them would set up shop on the Oregon coast.”

Charles continued, “We did it in Colorado. Years ago the communities around Denver worked together and attracted some great businesses from the Silicon Valley. We had a good quality of life to offer. We were pro-active. Now, Denver and Boulder are too crowded and expensive. The Oregon coast can attract some of these businesses. You have Bandon Dunes. There is a buzz, nationally, around the golf course. Bandon Dunes provides an opportunity to raise your profile.” An interview is included in the Appendices on Charles Brunetti (*see Appendix L*).

Frank Casazza, a recently retired telecommunications executive living in Florence, believes coastal communities are not capitalizing on their assets. Frank said, “I have seen this from the corporate side of the table. Communities send delegations of local leaders—mayors, business people—to visit a company to make a pitch that their town is a great place to do business. That is what we are up against. If we want to succeed,



we have to make that level of commitment. We need to let those employers know we want them here. We need to travel to their offices to talk about our communities and our quality of life. And, we need to work with the State of Oregon to put incentives on the table.”

The mayor of Bend, Oregon—Bill Friedman— was interviewed about these issues. Bend is a celebrated community in a rural area that attracted quality employers because of Bend’s scenery and nearby amenities (e.g., Mount Bachelor ski center). Mayor Friedman was asked if he believed coastal communities could attract knowledge-based businesses the way Bend did. Mayor Friedman stated, “I think that could work on the Oregon coast. The coast, however, has a bunch of small towns. I do not think any single community has the critical mass to pull it off. You probably need to do something on a regional basis to have an impact. The whole coast needs to collaborate. In Bend—a larger community than the Oregon coastal communities—still needs to be rediscovered, all the time.”

Establish A Coastwide Marketing Committee

It is premature to say what an advertising campaign for the Oregon coast should look or sound like.

In the fall of 2005, OCZMA will establish a coastwide marketing committee to develop the campaign. We will ask coastal leaders to approach talented people in their communities and ask them to volunteer their marketing expertise. There is a wealth of experienced marketing people on the Oregon coast in the Chambers of Commerce and in other economic development organizations. It promises to be a stimulating and fun process.

The state of Oregon’s *Brand Oregon* effort can play an important role in the marketing of the Oregon coast as a place to do business. *Brand Oregon* has an imaginative business recruitment effort that features the slogan, “Come for a week. Stay forever.” We should try to leverage that campaign to market the Oregon coast to business people outside our region.

Sample Approaches for a Coastwide Marketing Campaign



Two months ago *USA Today*, a national newspaper, ran a feature story on Bandon Dunes. The reporters interviewed people who recently moved to the Coos Bay Area. The article described how these people felt that they had found, “The next great place.”

What a great theme for a coastwide marketing campaign. The promotions could read, “The Next Great Place. The Oregon Coast.” The follow-up text could challenge the reader to “Be a Part of It.” We can feature brief testimonials

from business people who live and work on the Oregon coast.

Here is another suggestion. Let us show a split screen. On the left screen we show people stuck in a traffic jam. On the right screen we show an entrepreneur on the Oregon coast, dressed casually, walking down an un-crowded beach. The copy could read, “Be Productive...Be Here...What is Stopping You?”

Approaching Business People Vacationing on the Oregon Coast

Many of the business people who choose to locate a business on the Oregon coast first came to the coast on vacation.

We should ask ourselves: what else can we do to engage business people who are here on vacation? That is a great group of people to approach because they have already signaled an interest in the Oregon coast. There does not appear to be many efforts to approach business people vacationing on the Oregon coast about moving their business here.

There is one major exception. Just outside the North Bend Airport near the entrance, the South Coast Development Council (SCDC) erected a tasteful sign that can be seen by people golfing at Bandon Dunes. SCDC’s sign says, “You liked playing here. You’ll love living and working here!!!” The ad is very effective. We should seek similar opportunities to sell the Oregon coast as a place to carry out knowledge-based businesses. A campaign to approach business people on vacation, of course, must be executed with great care. It would be counterproductive to commercialize their leisure experience on the Oregon coast.



Rebecah Morris, Director of the Oregon Coast Visitors Association (OCVA), was contacted about these observations. Rebecah is also the Director for the Central Oregon Coast Association (COCA), a tourism marketing organization for Lincoln County. As such, Rebecah has experience with both local and coastwide tourism marketing. Rebecah commented, “I do not know that any of us in the tourism industry do anything to reach out to business people. It seems like we have two different communities. We have the economic development people over here, and, the tourism marketing people over there. I do not think anyone has ever gotten these two groups to work together before.” Rebecah also remarked, “And, in general, people focus on marketing their own community. We are learning that when people travel they just do not go to one community. They move around. We could all benefit by marketing the entire coastal region. I think people are starting to realize that.” In addition, Todd Davidson, Director of the Oregon Tourism Commission, agrees a stronger connection between tourism, marketing, and the economic development marketing needs to occur. Todd Davidson related that people in southern Oregon have started to forge these greater connections and have met with success and enthusiasm.

A review of the Chambers of Commerce web sites on the Oregon coast confirmed what Rebecah Morris was saying. The chambers in coastal communities generally present their communities as

great places to visit. And, the individual chambers naturally tend to focus their marketing efforts on their community. A review of the chambers web sites on the coast showed that most coastal chambers do not market their communities as good places to do business. Out of 23 chamber web sites, only three chambers invite people to explore business opportunities in their community as a leading or core message. The three chamber web sites that focus on attracting business as a core message are: the Astoria Area Chamber of Commerce, the City of Newport Chamber of Commerce, and the Bay Area (Coos Bay) Chamber of Commerce.

The Astoria Area Chamber of Commerce web site briefly describes that Clatsop County has route redundancy because of Qwest's major fiber deployment on the North Coast resulting from the SB 622 process. The South Coast Development Council's (SCDC) web site (which has links on the Bay Area Chamber of Commerce web site) has a page devoted to telecommunications that stresses that the Coos Bay Area has connectivity. On the telecommunications page, SCDC lists the Internet Service Providers, the telephone service providers and the cellular service providers as well as workforce development information. The SCDC web site is outstanding.

Again, the bottom line is, today, because of broadband, most if not all our coastal communities are good places to live and work, and not just good places to visit or retire.

A coastwide marketing committee could forge new linkages between tourism marketing and business recruitment efforts. Maybe business recruitment brochures can be placed in tourism marketing mailings. We should find ways to do more cross-marketing (tourism promotion and business development) references on web sites. Let us seek out examples of successful cross-marketing from other regions.

In the Meantime: Do Your Own Thing

A coastwide collaborative marketing campaign is meant to supplement existing promotion efforts. Again, everything about the strategy is voluntary. Community leaders are invited to use any part of this economic diversification strategy.

If you believe your community is ready to market itself to knowledge-based businesses, please, go for it! Do not wait for a coastwide marketing program. If you do not think you are ready, your community can always join a coastwide marketing program at a later date.

Experiences in Washington State with Marketing Rural Communities



The concept of marketing rural communities to urban businesses is not original. Four years ago Washington State University established a "Center to Bridge the Digital Divide" (CBDD). The Administrator of CBDD, Bill Gillis, learned some important lessons. Bill stated, "Well, we have learned that this is not easy. It takes a long time to make it work. In the last four years, CBDD developed a portfolio of rural communities that are now really ready to do this. We needed to develop an understanding of their labor/workforce issues. And, we needed to understand what

telecommunications infrastructure they had, what the limitations were.” Bill concluded, “So, four years later, only now are we really ready to approach urban-based businesses and say to them, ‘Here are some opportunities for you.’” We recommend you read the interview with Bill Gillis in the Appendices (*see Appendix M*).

