

DPAMS

Association Management Solutions

The Importance of State B&B Associations

Innkeeping is a vital segment of the hospitality industry, and state B&B associations provide a myriad of services that are critical to sustaining a healthy B&B industry and supporting innkeepers. The following services provided by state B&B associations maintain a positive image and strengthen the industry: education; quality standards, and strategic alliances.

The number of travelers staying at B&B/Inns is growing at a rapid pace. These folks come into contact with quality accommodations, excellent value and a personal touch when they stay at a B&B/Inn. A direct result of these positive experiences has been increased interest in the career of innkeeping. The state association is often the first contact when a person has a question about opening a B&B. The association serves as a source of information for future innkeepers who have questions about state rules and regulations for bed and breakfasts/inns. This information is crucial to creating a successful business plan and establishing a B&B/inn. It can save a potential innkeeper time and money as they prepare to renovate an existing building or build new.

Establishing and maintaining high standards of quality for member properties is another service of state associations. This service enhances the appeal of the B&B experience by assuring clean, comfortable accommodations to travelers. It benefits innkeepers by elevating the stature of B&B/Inns. Sometimes complaints are received, and mediation is another valuable service of state B&B associations. A representative of the association can listen to all involved in a complaint and affect a solution or compromise that is mutually agreeable.

State associations have the membership numbers to create change. Advocating for innkeepers is an important function of state B&B associations. Experience has proven that a large group of enlightened business owners working together can change proposed legislative initiatives that affect their trade.

Cooperative advertising is another strength of state B&B associations. Various marketing opportunities are presented to innkeepers daily. Maintaining a competitive edge within a budget can be difficult, but cooperative advertising opportunities (strength in numbers) provided by a state association provides a platform for negotiation. As president of Empire State Bed and Breakfast Association (ESBBA), one of my dreams was to have quality info-videos for tourist attractions for each of the 11 tourism regions in New York State on the regional pages of www.esbba.com. This was an awesome undertaking time-wise for a videographer and money-wise for the Association. We were able to negotiate a very reasonable price because the videographer realized the potential to make a video of individual member B&B properties in the future. We will be starting this project in January 2009.

An engaged state association will seek out opportunities for marketing by establishing strategic alliances. In an environment of limited funding opportunities, it is imperative to develop and maintain connections with tourism attractions and agencies. State B&B associations can reach out and create cooperative opportunities to promote tourism in the state. In 2007, ESBBA and Parks & Trails New York worked on an Explore NY Grant to create a program called ***Bicyclists Welcome!*** We received the grant and will produce an interactive Web site showing bike trails in NYS with links to ESBBA bed and breakfasts plus a printed travel map displaying the trails and member B&B's. It is a win-win program for all--Parks & Trails NY, ESBBA members, New York State and the environment. Bicyclists will have a useful source of information about trails and lodging for trip planning, innkeepers will gain exposure for their businesses and NYS bike trails will be promoted to bicyclists via major biking publications, press releases about the program, web links on biking sites and the map.

State B&B associations have unending potential to strengthen the B&B/Inns business and the well-being of innkeepers. It is imperative that state associations continue to take the leadership role and educate and inspire innkeepers. Dedicated leadership with vision and commitment will shape the future of state B&B associations and continue to ensure a healthy B&B hospitality industry.

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Bio: Donna Powell is founder of DP Association Management Solutions – a business specializing in state B&B association management. She has owned and operated Rufus Tanner House B&B in Pine City, NY for 10 years. She was membership chair of Empire State Bed and Breakfast Association (ESBBA) from 2000-2004 and president of ESBBA 2004-2008.