



By JENNIFER DENEVAN, Needles Desert Star
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Tourism promoter makes pitch for Visit California, Discover Inland Empire



NEEDLES — Brian Tucker, Industry Relations Liaison - Southern California for Visit California, and Brittney Carter, Industry Liaison for Discover Inland Empire, visited local business owners Jan. 31 to talk about marketing and using Visit California and DiscoverIE to the best of their ability.

Tucker had been with DiscoverIE and has now moved to working with Visit California, the marketing group for the state. He visited Needles about a year ago to discuss the benefits of joining the group DiscoverIE.

Brian Tucker of Visit California, right, speaks with city manager Rick Daniels, center and Phil Crouch, of Best Western Colorado River Inn/Rio Del Sol Inn, during a visit Jan. 31. Tucker spoke of how local business owners can benefit from joining Visit California's industry website and the useful tools on that site.
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Tucker was also one of the main speakers at the tourism summit local business owners attended to learn about the benefits of tourism and marketing. The summit was held in September in Highland.

This time around the focus was on the bigger picture - Visit California. He talked about the organization and all they are able to accomplish in terms of tourism.

He reiterated talking points from the tourism summit in Highland. He said numbers in terms of tourism that were reported then are projected to grow in 2014. This includes numbers of tourists and how much is spent while visiting.

"You're the experts," Tucker said. "You tell the story. You live, eat and breath this area."

He told business owners it's up to them to be sure visitors know what resources are available to tourists. One great way of doing this is to use the Visit California industry website.

Business owners can put up listings but also include a 250-word summary of the business and what it has to offer, he said. The more that summary includes things to do and see, the better.

One key element to marketing, Tucker said, is images. He said visitors want to be inspired and one of the best ways to be inspired is through images that capture the essence of a location.

He suggested photos of the Colorado River and various restaurants as examples to help "inspire" visitors to come and stay in Needles longer. The bigger issue is not only getting visitors to come but to stay longer, he said.

Tucker also tied in DiscoverIE. He said information businesses provide to DiscoverIE will be filtered upward to Visit California.

DiscoverIE will continue to be a useful tool that needs to be taken advantage of, he said. DiscoverIE helps on a regional level while Visit California looks at marketing from a statewide perspective.

City manager Rick Daniels attended the informal roundtable discussion in addition to several local business owners. City councilwoman Linda Kidd also attended.

Jan Jernigan, Needles Downtown Business Alliance president, attended. She said bringing Tucker and Carter to Needles was about further making connections to entities that can help Needles with marketing the city and increasing tourism.

She said it's important for local businesses to get listed with DiscoverIE and with Visit California to help get the word out about Needles.

Needles Economic Development Corporation, which Jernigan is also a member of, has been a member of DiscoverIE for about a year, Jernigan said. It's been successful for them and the city thus far, she continued.

The hope is to continue that success and to grow it further, she said.