

CASE HISTORY

Synopsis: *Strategic partnerships combine to move brand from a “low price” to a “value” positioning, introduce new product and increase revenue per customer*

Client: **FIRSTOURS (CARLSON TRAVEL GROUP)**

Situation: For 60 years, Firstours had marketed low-cost city and event vacation packages to a variety of U.S. destinations with good success, moving roughly 30,000 passengers per year. Firstours then entered the Hawaii market with low-cost packages, and expanded to Mexico a year later. The company suffered two major set-backs: (1) The Hawaii Express, its low-cost airline for Hawaii, went out of business and TV news programs delighted in showing stranded Firstours passengers at the Honolulu airport, and (2) a supplier of Super Bowl tickets ceased operations and, for the second time in a two-week period, Firstours' clients were shown on TV news being stranded without getting what they paid for.

Action: I created "The Whole Hawaii Catalog" and worked with Firstours to attain cooperative marketing agreements with United Airlines, Hyatt Hotels and other major, nationally known suppliers – all designed to create a "quality by association" impression, negate past difficulties and move from a “low price” to “value price” positioning. A complete media and promotional program, including broadcast, newspapers, consumer and travel trade magazines, publicity, brochures, direct mail, consumer sweepstakes and others all were designed to link Firstours as closely as possible to its well recognized, highly respected airline and hotel partners. Firstours also followed the my "Whole Hawaii Catalog" recommendation in expanding its product mix to include air-inclusive vacations, "land-only" packages, escorted tours and multi-island vacations.

Results: Within one year, Firstours not only retained its base of Hawaii business but increased passenger volume by more than 60 percent and, more importantly, increased sales per passenger with its upgraded product line by 70 percent – which meant a total dollar volume increase of 165 percent! As a result, Firstours became one of the nation's top 10 Hawaii wholesaler vacation companies while operating from only seven gateway markets.

