



Creating a Culture of Hospitality through the CTA Program

The Dallas/Fort Worth Area Tourism Council (DFWATC) has partnered with area convention & visitor bureaus, the Hotel Association of North Texas, DFW International Airport and the North Central Texas Council of Governments to develop the Certified Tourism Ambassador (CTA) Program for North Texas.

This is a region-wide program and is focused on promoting tourism and tourism revenue into the regional economy by creating a culture of hospitality, so that front-line hospitality employees and volunteers understand it at its core and are inspired to make every visit to the DFW area a positive experience for the traveler.

This nationwide certification program promotes product knowledge. Through the initial certification, this program not only teaches the basics of exceeding customer expectations, it also teaches why tourism is important and gives valuable product knowledge to the front-line employees. The learning objectives and customized curriculum focus on giving front line employees and volunteers the tools and confidence they need to create memorable experiences. And the annual renewal requirements ensure that the ambassador corps is forever building upon their product knowledge base.

During the last quarter of 2008, a series of 11 focus groups were held all over the D/FW area. These focus groups consisted of over 150 participants representing a broad

spectrum of business within the hospitality/travel industry as well as individuals on the front-line and in management positions. Next, a Subject Matter Expert Panel was utilized to hone in on specific knowledge points. Rounding out these two steps was an on-line survey that was pushed out to all focus group attendees and to all partners within many partner organizations to get their feedback.

From these steps, the curriculum is customized specifically for our region's needs and will be specific to our area's history, attractions and culture.

Mark D. Thompson, Chair of DFWATC, stated "We're excited that the DFW area is the first in Texas to implement this program and proud to join other destinations that have developed the CTA program with the Tourism Ambassador Institute."

Other cities in the program include Phoenix, Baltimore, Kansas City, Spokane, Milwaukee, Lexington, Tucson and Anaheim.

A preliminary class and facilitator training will take place in late April with the official program kick-off during National Tourism Week, May 11 -15, 2009.



CTA News is a publication of the Dallas/Fort Worth Area Tourism Council (DFWATC) and North Texas Tourism Ambassadors Program (NTTAP).



The mission of the North Texas Tourism Ambassadors Program (NTTAP) is to increase tourism by inspiring front-line employees and volunteers to work together to turn every visitor encounter into a positive experience in the North Texas region.

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Tourism is big business for North Texas

Tourism is a vital industry to Texas. Not only does it provide economic benefit to communities by bringing in new sources of revenue, but it also creates jobs within the community.

D/FW Area Tourism Economic Impact Figures* :

- The D/FW Area is the #1 tourist destination in Texas
- Provided \$18.2 billion - more than one third of the State's tourist spending of \$56.7 billion
- Provided over 152,560 jobs with an annual payroll of \$5.9 billion
- The DFW area through tourism contributed over \$1 billion in local and state taxes.

State of Texas Tourism Economic Impact Figures* :

- Total direct travel spending in Texas was \$56.7 billion and represents a 5.4 percent increase over the preceding year.
- Texas residents accounted for one-half of all visitor spending in Texas in 2007. International visitors accounted for 10 percent and residents from other states accounted for 40 percent.
- Visitors who stayed overnight in commercial lodging spent \$25.8 billion in 2007, which represents more than one-half of all visitor spending at destinations in the state.
- Directly supported over 534,000 jobs with an annual payroll of \$16.3 billion.
- Indirectly supported through re-spending of travel related revenues an additional 469,000 jobs and a \$16.3 billion in earnings.
- Total tax impact (local, state, federal) of travel spending in Texas was \$7.4 billion. Without this tax-generated revenue, each household in Texas would have had to pay \$880 in additional taxes.

* Information gathered from the Texas Economic Development-Travel Research Section (2007P numbers).

The Nuts & Bolts of the Program

With a solid foundation of research and industry input, the North Texas Tourism Ambassadors Program (NTTAP) will be a wonderful tool and resource for our region's front-line and visitor personnel.

NTTAP teaches front-line employees how to interact with visitors and explains their role in increasing tourism. NTTAP helps workers to increase their knowledge of the region, provides answers to common visitors' questions, and gives them a chance to meet one another and learn from each others' experiences.

What separates the North Texas Tourism Ambassadors Program from other training programs is that it also provides certification—not just training. As an accredited provider, the DFWATC presents the official Certified Tourism Ambassador (CTA) designation on behalf of the Tourism Ambassador Institute, the national oversight body for the certification program. To become a CTA, a participant must complete pre-class reading, exercises, a half-day class and a pass an open-book examination.

Comprised of four modules, the Body of Knowledge covers the important elements of tourism, regional attributes/attractions and customer service. The

interactive classroom setting makes it an interesting, fun way to expand participants' knowledge and ability to answer visitor questions.

The curriculum Includes four modules:

1. The Power of Travel and Tourism
2. Discovering Dallas/Fort Worth & Beyond
3. Knowing, Finding, Using Resources
4. Enhancing the Visitor Experience

An annual renewal process of certification is also necessary to maintain certification. There are many ways CTA's can earn points toward their renewal, from visiting attractions, volunteering at events, reading articles, etc., CTA's will be able to continue to build on their knowledge of the region and what it offers as a destination.

Employees and volunteers who complete the program receive the CTA designation and a pin that can be worn on their lapels or uniforms to denote the commitment to their profession (for example, John Smith CTA).

The Need for the CTA Program

In 2003, DFWATC received a \$25,000 grant from the WorkSource for Dallas County to conduct a Gap Analysis. The grant was given because of our industry's concern about workforce issues and about having a qualified workforce in the future. Since a majority of emerging employment opportunities for the rest of this decade will be in service industries, developing hospitality skills and basic customer service skills is very important.

An outside economist was hired to fulfill the requirements of the grant. Following are some of the things learned and gaps as seen by human resource managers in the travel industry with regard to recruitment issues:

- Poor writing/grammar skills in English Language
- Lack of proficiency in basic math skills
- **Lack of communication skills & knowledge to provide quality customer service**
- Lack of positive work and business ethic
- Lack of understanding of basic business practices
- **Lack of understanding of how their job and their employers business fits into the hospitality industry and global economy**

This is one of the reasons DFWATC is supportive of this effort, because we see the need if our industry is to grow and survive.

In addition, there are many other factors that cite the need for this type of program:

- Knowledge workers have two main needs: formal education that enables them to enter knowledge work in the first place, and continuing education throughout their working lives to keep their knowledge up to date. (Source: The New Work Force, The Economist, Nov 2001)
- Explore new ways of delivering education to adult workforce (Source: Beyond Workforce 2020, Hudson Institute)
- Seventy-five percent of the American workforce will need to be re-trained merely to retain their jobs. (Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics)

- In the future, even more emphasis will be placed on skills that cannot be automated - caring, judgment, intuition, ethics, inspiration, friendliness, and imagination. (Source: Futurist, Sep-Oct 2004)

New business models have caused longstanding industry business to change their way of thinking, such as the case for the transportation industry. They've had to shift their thinking to make "human infrastructure" as important as "physical infrastructure" (Source: Examining Issues & Gaps in the Tourism Workforce, June 7, 2004)

Why Customers Quit—68% quit because of an attitude of indifference or rudeness toward the customer by the owner, manager, or some employee. (Source: Public Agenda Research).

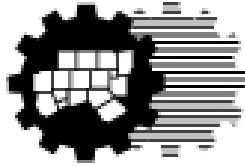
When hospitality workers provide quality service, our visitors are more likely to have a fun, enjoyable stay. Then they are more likely to tell their friends and return for future visits. Everyone benefits: the visitor, the hospitality industry, the local economy and most importantly, the front-line worker.

Our North Texas region will be host to major sporting events, conventions and vacationers of all types that will bring in millions of dollars worth of revenue into our economy.

Promote Dallas/Fort Worth & Beyond and advance your career with the North Texas Tourism Ambassadors Program.



Program Sponsors



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