



Five Questions with William Pate

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William Pate is a long-time fixture of the Atlanta business community. With a background in public relations and marketing, Pate provides a unique perspective to his current role as President and CEO of Atlanta Convention & Visitors Bureau. He is the face of an industry that brought 39 million people to the city in 2011 and generated more than \$11 billion in visitor spending. Previously, Pate served as the Chief Marketing Officer for Bell South and as a senior marketing executive at MCI. With success in the corporate and non-profit world, he knows the power of momentum. Something he and Atlanta have a lot of in 2013.



You've had a diverse career. What has the transition been like moving from the corporate C-suite to leading a large non-profit? Was there a learning curve?

I woke up every morning of my corporate career thinking about how I could take market share from my competitors. The transition to the non-profit, hospitality world took me by surprise because the industry is very collegial. Yes we compete, but we also work together to grow the industry. As the pie gets larger, everyone is able to grow their portion of the business. When the hospitality industry thrives, it creates more jobs. When national issues have the potential to threaten those jobs, hospitality leaders are quick to pull together and tackle those issues with one voice.

It seems there's never enough money in marketing. Having experience in both the corporate and non-profit world, how do you stretch marketing dollars to get the most impact?

I believe momentum drives markets. To build momentum, you've got to constantly provide your customers with new news. People want to travel to the cities that are "hot" because

they seem to be constantly reading and hearing about them. We regularly communicate through all of our marketing channels about new and exciting developments in Atlanta like the international terminal at the airport, the new stadium, the streetcar and new attractions like the College Football Hall of Fame and the National Center for Civil and Human Rights. The strategy is to create as many touch points as possible to get that information to our customers as frequently as possible. We execute strong media relations and marketing campaigns, have face-to-face meetings and bring customers to the city so they can experience our offerings first-hand.

As head of the ACVB, you have a role in major projects around town. How important are developments such as the new Falcons stadium to promoting tourism and the City of Atlanta?

The new stadium is about much more than just a new place for the Falcons to play. It will serve as a catalyst for additional downtown development and will give us the latest and most advanced facility to pitch for future NCAA Final Four tournaments, the NCAA Football Championship and the Super Bowl, to name a few. Each of those events is worth millions of dollars to the city and the state. In addition to the stadium, the next three years will also bring construction of the College Football Hall of Fame, the National Center for Civil and Human Rights and the new streetcar. These projects create a desire for people to be here, to be a part of the pace with which we are growing and to experience first-hand why it's an exciting time to visit Atlanta. Any other city would love to have a fraction of the new development that we have in this town.

Tourism is already an \$11 billion industry in Atlanta. We've seen so much growth since the Georgia Aquarium opened in 2005. What do you envision for the city in the years to come with the opening of the National Center for Civil and Human Rights and the College Football Hall of Fame?

Such a well-rounded list of major attractions is indicative of a very healthy city. We have the infrastructure to host any event and the venues to entertain our guests from Buckhead to Midtown to the Luckie-Marietta District downtown. Atlanta's hospitality business is on a very healthy trajectory, which will fill these venues and attract new development in years to come.

You've worked with a lot of marketing agencies during your career. What is the key to a successful agency/client relationship?

The most important thing is to have good, honest collaboration. You hire agencies for their expertise. You've got to trust their recommendations. They may not approach things in exactly the same manner you would, but then again, that is why you hired them. I think it is very counter-productive to hire an agency and then spend your time trying to bend them to your will. The hardest thing to do is approve a creative concept that you don't personally love. But if it sells the product, what does it matter? Trust the agency that you've hired and let them do their job. That way, everyone will be successful.