



Members of Rudi's Organic Bakery's incentive trip, including broker Mike Manning (front left) and Manager of Sales Planning and Administration Alison Boyd (front right), receive a tour of SOS Children's Village in Jamaica



All the Right Ingredients

A sales incentive trip to Jamaica offered employees and brokers of Rudi's Organic Bakery luxury as well as a sense of purpose

BY ALEX PALMER

Based in Boulder, Colo., Rudi's Organic Bakery, the largest producer of organic breads and rolls in the country, already has social and environmental responsibility baked into the products it sells through its low-impact organic growing practices. Perhaps this made incorporating a socially responsible event a natural fit for the company's recent incentive trip to Jamaica.

The group consisted of about 30 employees and regional sales managers of Charter Baking Company, Rudi's parent company—though almost all participants sell for Rudi's. The individuals had reached the sales goals that were set for them through the second half of 2007. Leading up to the trip, salespeople received reminders, including a pound of Jamaican coffee and a video of the destination, sent out by the planners, Milestones! Incentive

Travel, Meetings & Events, based in Vista, Calif., to help them keep the end reward in their sights.

"It got them involved and excited, and made them realize that it was attainable," says Alison Boyd, manager of sales planning and administration for Rudi's.

Once finally chosen, the winners were off on a five-day, four-night trip to lush Montego Bay in the northern part of Jamaica. Staying in the five- and six-room villas at the Half Moon Rose Hall beach resort, the participants had no shortage of sandy beaches and picturesque surroundings. Together they spent a day climbing up Dunn's River Falls in Ocho Rios, and a shopping shuttle brought the group into town on another afternoon, but much of the time was free for the participants to take part in snorkeling, swimming with dolphins, fishing or bike riding with their spouse or other members of the group.

PROFILE

Rudi's Organic Bakery

Industry: Wholesale organic bakery

Challenge: As food costs rose and making sales became more challenging, the leadership at Rudi's Organic Bakery needed a meaningful way to motivate their employees and brokers during tough times

Solution: Brokers and salespeople who reached their sales goals joined in a memorable trip to Jamaica's Montego Bay, enjoying both luxury and social responsibility activities

ROI: Year-over-year sales growth of 30 percent; aggressive sales and new-item distribution goals were hit, at least partly due to the annual incentive trip

The participants were grateful to be able to spend so many hours doing what they pleased; “finding something that’s theirs, that’s special to them,” as Milestones! founder and owner Geraldine Gatehouse puts it. The fact that Milestones! arranged for Rudi’s to get all meals and beverages included in their package made the experience that much easier for both planners and participants.

“There are so many different options for restaurants at breakfast, lunch and dinner,” says Boyd. “They can eat wherever they want and are not paying out of pocket.”

One activity the group was able to do together if they chose (and three-fourths of participants did) was an event at the local orphanage, run by SOS Children’s Village. SOS is active in 132 countries and territories worldwide, organizing the means to raise children who do not have parents to care for them. The Jamaica village consists of several houses with a dozen or so boys and girls in each, as well as a “house mother” and an “auntie” who assists the mothers. Some of these overseers have been working there for decades. The children aren’t up for adoption, but rather have the orphanage as a kind of extended family.

Since much of the work SOS does relies on donations of money and supplies, Gatehouse saw this as a prime opportunity for Rudi’s Organic Bakery to contribute to the destination they were visiting while adding a personal and memorable touch to the trip.

“If you give money, you don’t really know where it is going, but you come somewhere like this orphanage and you know where it’s going, you can see what’s being built,” says Gatehouse. “It becomes personal.”

Gatehouse had coordinated among

SOS, Half Moon, and Rudi’s during the lead-up to the trip to promote this particular activity, finding out what supplies and donations the Village needed and communicating this to the company. The individual contributions of the group added up to a significant cash donation (donations were made anonymously, but the group gathered over \$3,000 for the project) and brought supplies to help with the renovation of the kindergarten kitchen.

When the group arrived, they



Above (from left to right): SOS Social Worker Fayola Cole, Milestones! Founder and Owner Geraldine Gatehouse, SOS Village Director Floyd Hitchman and SOS PR Coordinator Nadine Williams connected Rudi’s team with the orphans of SOS Children’s Village



made a presentation of the check to the orphanage, spent some time exploring the village, talking with the children and joining them in refreshments that had been donated by Half Moon Rose Hall. Gatehouse says she took measures to be sure it was a way for the group to really experience this side of Jamaica, not a PR event.

“I wanted it to be a time for people to just hang out with these children and find out what they were about, and just get to see what their life is,” says Gatehouse.

Three of the participants, including Boyd’s husband, went back to install countertops in the kitchen two days after the group visited the village, donating an

additional few hours to see that the village got one more thing that it needed.

Boost to Effectiveness

Incentive travel plays a significant role in Rudi’s sales plan, and the Jamaica trip was no exception. Boyd says the incentive was directly responsible for the company’s hitting its aggressive new-item distribution goals as well as being instrumental in the sales team’s exceeding sales goals. The company has seen a year-over-year sales growth of 30 percent, thanks in large part to the motivation these trips provide, before, during and after.

Boyd saw the experience with the village as a big boost to the program, enriching participants’ experience and sense of Jamaica. “It was a nice balance for the trip,” says Boyd. “To take them to a place that’s really positive, that’s doing wonderful things for the community...you come away feeling really good about what they’re doing and what you were able to do.”

Gatehouse agrees: “If you give people the opportunity to do something in a good setting where they’re getting something while they’re giving something, what you get back from it is remarkable.”

According to Boyd, the Jamaica trip for Rudi’s Organic Bakery had an impact, and the visit to the SOS Children’s Village was an important part of that. She says the boost from the trip came during the lead-up, throughout the trip itself, and especially after the employees have returned.

“[The sales managers] remain focused on the brand and the job that we’re asking them to do after they get back,” says Boyd. “They understand all the work that goes into providing [this trip] for them, and they appreciate that; and they realize that we appreciate the work they do.” ■

Send comments to alex.palmer@incentivemag.com