

CSI Restarts the Cold War for BMC Sales Executives

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Client: BMC Software

Program: Coming in From the Cold War



BMC Software reached its mid-year targets, and the enterprise management solutions provider wanted a creative incentive trip for its 80-person sales force to help recognize that achievement. It turned to Capitol Services, Inc. (CSI) to create a motivating experience for the sales executives, one that would inspire them to success in the second half of the year.

CSI was up against some major challenges. BMC's trip to Egypt had just fallen through, giving CSI a mere six weeks to plan and execute a trip to the substitute location, Washington D.C. To ensure that attendees wouldn't feel let down by the less exotic location, CSI vowed to wow them. It conceptualized a highly creative and fun experience, with exclusive access to places guests would not be able to see on their own, all within the constraints of the budget.

CSI's theme inspiration sprang from D.C.'s reputation as the "Spy Capital of the World". It decided to link the city to the Cold War, developing an exciting theme that highlighted espionage and scandal that have taken place in the United States' capital. CSI conducted extensive research into the Cold War and D.C. to flesh out the theme, identifying city venues with Cold War history. It then went into action, jumping into production and assembling a top support group of vendors to get everything accomplished within the condensed timeline. The CSI team dedicated themselves to providing access to venues that the general public never gets to see. For example, it was able to arrange a White House tour within six weeks for 80 people, usually a months-long process with a maximum of 20 guests.

Less than three weeks before the trip, BMC was forced to cut the budget in half. With quick thinking, CSI was able to adjust the trip to follow the reduced budget, reassigning venues, scaling back menus and gifts and juggling timing. The savvy team worked diligently to stay true to the



theme and provide an as-wonderful experience with the reduced resources.

Guests were treated to a one-of-a-kind Cold War experience. CSI re-created a White House State Dinner on a rooftop overlooking the actual White House. It matched décor to photos from actual state dinners and consulted with a former White House chef so that the menu and timing were as authentic as possible. The group also was thrilled by a private tour of the 1972 Democratic Headquarters at the Watergate Hotel. The owner of the suite, a history expert, provided the trip-goers with a rare tour, giving a detailed account of the infamous night.



Continuing to trace D.C. landmarks, participants enjoyed an exclusive cruise on the USS Sequoia, a decommissioned presidential yacht. Following the cruise, they were taken on a D.C. scandal tour, visiting sites of some of the city's dirty dealings: driving in front of the former Soviet Embassy, viewing a section of the Berlin Wall and driving past spy drop boxes.

The group also enjoyed special experiences at D.C. museums. At the International Spy Museum, the guests enjoyed lunch and toured the exhibits featuring showcases of the history of espionage. The travelers also visited the National Air and Space Museum for a beautiful meal set in the Space Race Gallery. The dinner, which took place on the 50th anniversary of the launch of Sputnik, was complemented by a retro menu and private tours led by the museum's curator.

CSI exceeded all the client's expectations. It created a rousing experience with a memorable, creative theme, all within a very tight timeline. The team was also able to stay under budget, even as it was cut shortly before the event. CSI made D.C. so exciting, and provided so many once-in-a-lifetime experiences, that the substitute location never paled in comparison to the original destination. As BMC's CEO remarked, the Cold War adventure was one of the very best trips the group ever had. ●