

Bob Gilbert (00:02):

Welcome to tourism heads and their tales. This is a podcast series that explores with travel and tourism leaders. Their take on key issues of the day. My name is Bob Gilbert, general manager for the tourism and destination marketing practice at the award-winning strategic marketing agency, Eddy Alexander. Looking back, I've had the privilege to have worked with a number of iconic global brands. I'll be chatting with those that are helping shape the future travel and tourism industry all with their own unique tales to share. And today's guest is Nan Marchand Beauvois. Nan is a very well known leader in travel and tourism circles as a senior vice president at the US Travel Association for over 11 years. She always has her finger on the tourism pulse. Listen, as we explore ESTO, the Educational Seminar for Tourism Organization, US travel Associations, National Councils, advocacy, Capital Hill, and Roger Dow. Join us on Tourism Heads and Their Tales. And I'm delighted to welcome today, Nan Marchand, who is the Senior Vice President. Uh, what is your full, you, you, you got my

Nan Marchand Beauvois (01:17):

Full title?

Bob Gilbert (01:18):

Right? You gotta give us the full, uh,

Nan Marchand Beauvois (01:20):

Senior Vice President of Membership in Industry Relations and General Manager of ESTO at US Travel Association.

Bob Gilbert (01:27):

There we go. So that's, that's, uh, that's a mouthful. You need two cards.

Nan Marchand Beauvois (01:30):

I know. Yeah,

Bob Gilbert (01:31):

For that, that easy on digital, but, um,

Nan Marchand Beauvois (01:33):

We're good at acronyms, but I don't know how we shorten that.

Bob Gilbert (01:36):

That you've been with US Travel Association for 11 years and seen so many changes over that period of time.

Nan Marchand Beauvois (01:43):

Definitely. Definitely the last two years. I think things have been, I guess, if you look at it, like after 9/11, there was disruption and then there was the calm for 10, 12 years. Um, you know, our

industry tends to be fairly resilient. So through the economic up and downs, yes, there's some fallout, but there's not the peaks and valleys that we've seen, like with COVID. I mean, now we just talk about our industry pre COVID and post COVID, because that has been seasonal that that's like generational change, I think for our industry because of COVID.

Bob Gilbert (02:17):

So let's look at ESTO has the purpose of ESTO changed over the years?

Nan Marchand Beauvois (02:23):

So ESTO is a marketing conference for those of you who don't know, it's a marketing conference that is only available to destination marketers at a city, state, or regional level. And the biggest changes that I've seen in the last 10 years that I have been working with ESTO is the type of content. Yes, we're a marketing conference, but destination, those who work in destinations, it's so much more than marketing it's about destination management. Um, so we have seen the change of the day to day work that a DMO does. And we have to pull in the whole management piece. We have to pull in the whole, the conversations D E and I equit equitability sustainability because all of that impacts what you do as a DMO. I was listening to Joe D'Alessandro yesterday, um, his, his main stage presentation about the homeless situation in San Francisco and how he has been incredibly proactive and taken a stance with the city.

Nan Marchand Beauvois (03:21):

And he said something that was just so simple, but so true. It's like anything that impacts the guest experience in my destination. I better have a seat at that table. And, and that I think has been the pivotal change that you've seen, whether it's a popular opinion or not a popular opinion, destination marketers are doing more than just, just creating a brand and promoting the brand. They have to worry about safety. <laugh> they have to worry about residents sentiment. They have to worry about protecting their environment. Now, where in your job description as a DMO, as a marketer, does it say that those things have to happen? Oh, and let's just talk about the political nature of the job, right? Because most DMO, either city or state report to an elected official of some sort, some type of a governmental structure or organization. So there's the political and lobbying end of the work as well, and really have seen that change over the years, but accelerated in the last two to four.

Bob Gilbert (04:21):

So the challenge from your perspective has to be as in any organization, any individual, the ability to be relevant, to maintain that relevance with your constituents.

Nan Marchand Beauvois (04:34):

Exactly.

Bob Gilbert (04:35):

So how do you do that?

Nan Marchand Beauvois (04:37):

Listening? And I think DMO sometimes, and I say this because I've worn that hat, I've sat in that seat. We tend to know what we know. And we, we stick with the formula that has worked. Like let's just look at the meeting side of the business. It's about heads and beds, but it can be about so much more. So I think we need to be a little uncomfortable with finding solutions for what we do and not look to the past, but definitely look to the future, right? There's there's no right answer. Right? You gotta figure it out as a community. You've gotta figure it out with your partners. You've gotta figure it out with your team and you've gotta figure it out with, with your clients. And, and there's no right answer because every single destination is unique. It has its own set of challenges and opportunities. So it's a very customized, a very personalized, approach in how you're working within your destination. And I think from a marketing standpoint, we need to take a, a, an example from like some major consumer brands and, and be a little edgier and, um, take more risks.

Bob Gilbert (05:48):

How many members, how many destinations are members of US travel as a whole? I mean, the ESTO and that council is a little different.

Nan Marchand Beauvois (05:55):

So yeah, so US travel as a whole. We are the trade association representing the interest of the hospitality industry in the United States. And we're unique as a trade association because we have probably 12 or 13 different business verticals under our umbrella. One of which happens to be the DMO of cities and states. So we have every single state and territory as a member and of, of the state and territory DMOs, probably about half of them sit on our board of directors. And we have, I'm gonna say 400 DMO members, um, all based in the United States. So it's, it's a good size of our organization. It's an important voice in that hospitality and travel.

Bob Gilbert (06:35):

And they have a seat at the table, or they have a seat at your table.

Nan Marchand Beauvois (06:38):

They sit at our table <laugh> yes, they do.

Bob Gilbert (06:41):

So within ESTO you have committees or a committee made up of what is the infrastructure? So

Nan Marchand Beauvois (06:48):

ESTO is, as I referenced a little earlier marketing conference, mm-hmm <affirmative> and I think why it's grown in popularity and in relevance is because, like I said, I've worn that DMO hat, but I am not current. I've been working at US travel for 11 years. I've gone from being a practitioner to being a trade association employee, right. That's, that's what I do now. I think part of the success, in ESTO is that we find a really good balance on content. And I do depend on my planning committee to help develop that content. And also those networking opportunities where people can engage and learn from each other. So the content is really structured in two ways, if you will, we have our main stage, which is our general sessions, and that is I try to pull in content that's outside of our industry because you marketing, you can learn best practices from

almost any vertical, right. Doesn't have to be in hospitality. And that usually tends to be at a 60,000 foot, or that's what I strive for. I strive for that Ted Ted experience on our main stage. And then our concurrent sessions are broken out by marketing discipline, if you will. And that is where you'll see, most of those sessions are, are it's peer to peer learning, um, best practices, what worked, what didn't work, um, examples, and then conversation. That's that's I think the formula for our success.

Bob Gilbert (08:06):

So how do you gauge the topics that you choose over the years? I mean, what changes have you seen? And the things people want to know about learn about,

Nan Marchand Beauvois (08:16):

We are very intentional with our survey and we don't just ask about satisfaction. We have spent a lot of money in working with an organization that does this survey for us, and it's not just about val, it's about value and it's about satisfaction. And we look at the gaps between the two to better analyze where are our opportunities and where are some challenges, which are always opportunities, cause you can always make it better. So I really, really take a look at that, those responses and that helps set the stage for planning for the next year. And like I said, also, as we really depend on those who are in the trenches, those who are working day to day, living and breathing in that space. And I ask for their opinion, they help develop sessions and, and we work with them on developing the content.

Bob Gilbert (09:01):

Have you seen a shift though in the kinds of, in things they want to learn and, and that

Nan Marchand Beauvois (09:05):

It's, it's gone away from being a pure marketing conference to like, uh, funding conversations on funding, conversations on D E and I, conversations on responsible tourism, conversations on

Bob Gilbert (09:18):

Workforce

Nan Marchand Beauvois (09:19):

Workforce, big one big, big one, um, conversations on managing the visitor experience, conversations on how do engage our community, our residents. How do we go beyond talking about what the value is to our city? How do we go beyond talking about just heads and beds? And it was a record breaking year. What does that mean to someone living down on Elm Street? Why should they care and why do our elected officials, why do, why will they continue to fund us? What's our value proposition? What's our unique value proposition to the community where we live and operate? So that that's very different than what's my branding content content. What's my, you know, what are the metrics? What are, you know, it's just a different conversation. It's still part of the conversation, but it's not the only part of the conversation. And I think that's where the destination management part comes in.

Bob Gilbert (10:11):

Yup. And, and still relevant within the destination world as one of those events that you it's a do not miss on their calendars.

Nan Marchand Beauvois (10:20):

I like to think. So. I think it's, you know, it has grown. I mean, when I started in 2011, um, I think ESTO the first ESTO and that was the first ESTO I had ever been at. So here I'm planning a conference coming in, midyear planning a conference that as a DMO, I had never gone to interestingly enough. So I'm planning this conference and what I've learned over the years is it really is about being relevant. We've grown from a conference about 350- 400 people. Um, 2019, we were close to 1200 people. Obviously we were dark in 20. Uh, 21 we actually came back. We had a hybrid experience and we actually put a cap on our attendance. Last year, we said 700, we registered 700 and we had more register for the live event than the virtual event, but that was in August. And you know what started happening in August, right Delta, but we only lost 50 live attendees. So we ended up with 650. Wow. On site in Los Angeles, we were at the JW. But what we saw was that many more people started registering for the virtual experience. Um, then that went out from about 100 to 200 and something within a week. This year we will be held. ESTO will be in August in Grand Rapids. Yeah. Grand Rapids, Michigan. August 6th-9th.

Bob Gilbert (11:38):

So let's, uh, let's, let's talk about some of the other councils.

Nan Marchand Beauvois (11:42):

Sure. So US at US Travel Association, we have, uh, one of the best ways to engage with our members and have our members engage with us is through our councils and our councils have been around for much longer than I've been there. I can tell you that when I was a practitioner, I have sat on the attractions council, which is now called the National Council of Attraction Experiences. When I was at Universal, I actually sat on that council. When I was a DMO, I actually sat on the destinations council. The one council I haven't sat on is the Council of State Tourism Directors. So these are, um, each of the councils has, uh, their board of advisors. They have their executive committee and they're tasked really with helping us understand what's current what's going on, but also developing programs that are of value back through the organization, back to their, to their colleagues back through that vertical. I think the state directors have been around since the sixties.

Bob Gilbert (12:42):

Wow.

Nan Marchand Beauvois (12:42):

And I know, I mean, you know, I started in this industry in 86' and I know the attractions council was there and obviously the DMO council was there as well. So it's been something that, that we've had at US Travel for a long time. And it's really evolved over the years to maintain its relevance, not only for the association, but also back to the membership. And it continues to evolve because things change and we can't be static. We have to evolve with them and we have to change and we have to be sensitive and listen to the needs of our members.

Bob Gilbert (13:13):

So, you know, I know a little bit about the experience industry. Yes. Um, is that a, a group that is a vibrant group? Is that something that is growing there seems to be more attention from an, a tourism industry, uh, standpoint on the value of, um, experiences. It's why people travel somewhere, uh, from a leisure perspective, not a purpose driven trip that they want to experience something. That's why they go.

Nan Marchand Beauvois (13:40):

But it can be a purpose driven trip in for sports or for an event.

Bob Gilbert (13:46):

Yep. True.

Nan Marchand Beauvois (13:46):

Concert or something like that. That's a very unique council, the National Council of Attractions and Experiences because unlike the state directors, they're all, they're all state tourism offices, right? The destinations council, they're all DMOs. This group is incredibly diverse.

Bob Gilbert (14:01):

They're gregarious,

Nan Marchand Beauvois (14:03):

They're gregarious, they're diverse. Um, because, and there are multiple interest and different needs. So a shopping center, a retail operation is different than a theme park is different than a restaurant is different than a national park. Uh, just to give you an example, all of those experiences, the why people travel is that council, those are the members, that's our members that they make up that council.

Bob Gilbert (14:28):

So it's a diverse group, right. It

Nan Marchand Beauvois (14:29):

Is a diverse

Bob Gilbert (14:30):

Group. So how the heck do you wrangle all of these different entities with probably similar and aligned objectives, but mm-hmm, <affirmative> coming at it from

Nan Marchand Beauvois (14:40):

Different angles. Yeah. Very different perspective.

Bob Gilbert (14:43):

How do you put your arms around

Nan Marchand Beauvois (14:45):

Them? Um, I try not to put my arms around them, but I think we, because they're all so different, but I think the one thing that they can all agree on is what is the most valuable thing for them to create, to work on. And it's been distilled down to really two things, two experiences. One is providing unique research. That's specific to the attractions vertical and the experience vertical. So in the last several years, we've partnered with Arrival and looking at research, that's very specific to that vertical. And, um, also everybody in that particular council, they, IPW is, especially if they're involved in international marketing, international sales, IPW is a do not miss. They have to be there. So they've very successfully for the last six years, I think, possibly more. Um, it's all starting to run together. They host a client event at IPW and it's not huge.

Nan Marchand Beauvois (15:38):

It's I think at its peak, it was about 150 people, but it has so much value for them. So those of our members that are part of the attractions council and they are invited to participate and they get some really cool time with the buyers before the frenzy of IPW happens on the show floor. Right. So, so it's just really distilling it down to what are the two most important things for you and for this group and collectively they can agree on those two things. So that's kind of been the formula of their success moving forward. And one of the things I'm in the process of doing with our council, specifically the Attractions and our Destinations Council is, you know, you have to take a look at what you do frequently. Um, we don't wanna be static. We wanna make sure that it's still valuable for our members. It's valuable. This is volunteer leadership on these councils that it's still valuable for their time to participate. And what is, what the output is, is still valuable to the membership. So we're probably gonna do some, um, strategic assessment moving forward in the next year for the groups and making sure that we're still on point and that we're still delivering what makes sense for these verticals.

Bob Gilbert (16:45):

And it's interesting with the partnerships that you have with people like, you know, Douglas Quimby over at Arrival, were you at the San Diego event the other week?

Nan Marchand Beauvois (16:56):

Unfortunately, we were supposed to have our council meeting there, but, um, you know, workforce issues, I have, I currently find myself with no councils team. All of my three employees in that area have all gone on to bigger and better. And I'm incredibly proud of them all they know who they are, if they're listening. Um, they've all gone on to really great opportunities outside of US Travel. So I, it was not a good time to have a meeting or to, to travel

Bob Gilbert (17:20):

<laugh> bandwidth.

Nan Marchand Beauvois (17:22):

Bandwidth, but it, it, but some of the group were there and they met as a group and they had a social gathering and that was fine. We will be having our, our first meeting of the year, which is in conjunction with our Destination Capitol Hill, which is our legislative fly in event. And also our board of directors meeting.

Bob Gilbert (17:37):

The board is the board, or is that the, um, chairman's circle or

Nan Marchand Beauvois (17:42):

That's the chairman's circle? Yeah, the board of US Travel Association. Right. I don't know if you noticed I've been calling my council board board of advisors because the board of directors are the board of directors of the association. And our council board is our board of advisors for those councils. Okay. So each of our council boards of advisors will have their meetings, as well as our US Travel board of directors meeting.

Bob Gilbert (18:06):

So with the relationships that you have with people like Arrival, I mean, it just makes sense. They're kind of focused in their field. Do you know, Douglas's background is research. He, he brings a lot of research to the, to the table. Do you have other partnerships with yeah. Organizations that

Nan Marchand Beauvois (18:23):

We're, we're looking at a partnership of a product, a benchmarking product with ROVE Marketing. We are looking at for the attractions. We are also in the process of working on a product with Simple View, that's going to benchmark website traffic. So it's like when you benchmark your website traffic, I think today you're probably in there with a cruise line, an airline, and all of that. It's really not apples to apple and what we're apples to apple. And what we're gonna be looking at is just DMO traffic metrics. So that is a work in progress. We'll be premiering that at ESTO this year and the ROVE Marketing product, um, for attractions will be launched in March.

Bob Gilbert (19:06):

So that's a lot on your plate. There's a lot going on.

Nan Marchand Beauvois (19:08):

Fingers crossed. Well, you know, what of the work has already been done? It's not, I have a, yeah, we work with our research team internally and outside. And a lot of that work has already because it's, it's been a long, you know, it's in development for a while. I just need to push it over the, the finish line.

Bob Gilbert (19:23):

So kind of going from macro to micro, well, reverse back up, talk about US Travel Association as a whole, you know, what ch well, we know of one change. Yes. So change what did is going on retirement or whatever that word means for him,

Nan Marchand Beauvois (19:41):

Whatever that, whatever the, whatever the definition is for Roger. Yes, Roger, last year at our July board meeting announced that he would be stepping down in July of 2022 after our July board meeting. So our, we are in a search for our new CEO. And so, you know, that's, that's a

big, that's gonna be a big change. Roger, you know, Roger's the heart and soul of this, of this industry. Everybody knows Roger globally. And, and he has really brought this association to, to, to the success that it has and it enjoys today and, and the structure and the vision and the work that we do. It's, that's, that's all through Roger's leadership. So my goals, my hope for our new leader is it's like, what does the industry need in the next five years, 10 years look, future focus. What do we need to do? How do we keep on top of the change? How, uh, we know that there's things we need to be working on today, but like, for example, what does electric vehicles and how does that impact travel mobility? And what does that mean to the industry? So we always have to be looking today, short term, and long term.

Bob Gilbert (20:46):

Yeah. I look at US Travel Association and, you know, include you in this, that obviously you are a senior executive within the organization, but the efforts that you have undertaken to the government, to on behalf of the industry and sitting down with the president, presidents, S, I know there was virtual

Nan Marchand Beauvois (21:09):

Twice, multiple.

Bob Gilbert (21:10):

There was yeah.

Nan Marchand Beauvois (21:11):

Multiple different administrations. That is, that is our, that is one of our key strengths. Um, that's in our wheelhouse lobbying on behalf of industry, making sure that our industry has a voice at the table at, at the, at the table table, table the table. Right. Um, and making sure that the administration, whichever administration, it happens to be, understands the value of the industry from a, from an economic perspective, but also from just sheer manpower, how many people are employed by this industry. So that is something that we, um, do very well. That is something that I think our members, um, have truly come to recognize and appreciate, especially in the last two years, I mean, it was like a 24/7 cycle of staying on top of what's going on in government, where are the places where we can insert ourselves, our voice, our needs, um, being heard, being listened to when having the appropriate actions follow suit based on our lobbying efforts. So it's been fairly successful.

Bob Gilbert (22:12):

I would absolutely agree and applaud the efforts with the workforce. I remember the statistics about every state employed. It was either the first or second employment group

Nan Marchand Beauvois (22:26):

Group. Yeah, definitely the top five, I think for every single state. And some, as you're saying it's either one, two or three, so workforce is an issue. It has, it was an issue before COVID. COVID has just accelerated it. And for us, I think it's not a policy play or a government play as much as really taking a look and telling our story better, pushing out the value of working. It's almost like a public service announcement. What is the value of working in this industry? Really doing a

much better job at telling our story? Um, we had a campaign called, um, mid 2021, trying to get people to start dreaming about travel again, maybe not act on it yet, but it's there for you dream about it, keep it top of mind. And that was called, "Let's Go There." Right? And that was incredibly successful.

Nan Marchand Beauvois (23:19):

And then that morphed at the end of last year, to just through it terminates the, it finishes the end of February about really taking that same philosophy and that same structure and focusing on the meeting space because domestic travel has rebounded. We know international still has a way to go. And definitely the professional meetings and business events have not rebounded yet. I mean, we're sitting in San Francisco, you have hotels that are still closed. This hotel where we're sitting at only one of three towers is opened. It is impacting the economic vitality of our major cities, our major gateway cities by not having the meetings and business sector back. And as an industry, we're not whole until all of our sectors are back up and hold and whole. So that was really the messaging behind let's meet. There was to talk outside of the industry, to elected officials, to corporate CEOs about number one we're meeting right now, we know as an industry, how to meet safely.

Nan Marchand Beauvois (24:18):

That's what meeting planners do. It's always about duty of care to their attendees. And if you have a group of individuals, professionals who know how to, how to keep people safe, planners know how to do that. And so meetings have taken place through all of last year, and continue to take place. And it's all about mitigating risk. No one is saying they're going to eliminate risk, but it's about mitigating those risks so that the business can continue to move forward. And we of, yeah, we've had the meetings means business coalition for over 10 years, that was talking about the value of the meetings industry. And what we have decided as a group is to bring that work back in house, because we do recognize that we have to talk about it all the time. It has to be part of our advocacy effort. So the work of the meeting meetings and business events and, and corporate travel is one of the cornerstones of the work that us travel is doing. Just like domestic travel, just like international travel it's now also, we also focus on the professional meetings and business events as well. Is That a mouthful?

Bob Gilbert (25:18):

That's...

Nan Marchand Beauvois (25:20):

Never a dull moment. Yeah.

Bob Gilbert (25:21):

Indeed. You know, but it is promising if I look at indicators longer term indicators and you see the international airlines, uh, investing in new routes, coming into the US, some of them growing faster than 2019, uh, you know, that's encouraging and that's long term. So that's investing now for tomorrow and looking domestically, we see new startup airlines in the last six months. Two, I know of that service, a destination that I'm very familiar with, which is Eureka and two new airlines, one out of Burbank and the other one out of Reno, Reno, exactly as their hubs and other

airlines that service the same destination with increased, um, frequency, increased frequency. So that's good investing in a time where, you know, we know the time we're in, we know the time that we are living in. So I mean, to me, that bodes well. And I, I think that talks to the confidence within travel and tourism, which large part is down to what you and your colleagues do at us travel association to build that confidence and to, you know, give people that sense of, um, strength that, you know, we're all in this together. We're gonna, we'll get out of this together.

Nan Marchand Beauvois ([26:35](#)):

And it's, it's amazing how resilient this industry actually is. And we can't do the work that we do without the supportive industry. So it truly is a collective effort because when we need to get the attention of particular on particular issue in Washington, DC, we reach out to our membership, uh, and say, we need your help or sign on to this letter or something. So it truly takes a village. And our success is, is really because of our members who help us get to where we need to go. We're leading the charge, but we can't do it without the army and back of us. And that's the industry and it's an incredibly resilient industry. And I think the future is bright.

Bob Gilbert ([27:15](#)):

Well, you've certainly brightened up our day here today. So thank

Nan Marchand Beauvois ([27:19](#)):

Very kind of you. Thank you very

Bob Gilbert ([27:20](#)):

Much, Bob. And, um, appreciate that. I wish you continued success. Well, thank

Nan Marchand Beauvois ([27:24](#)):

Pleasure. Thank you very much. Appreciate it. Thank you.

Bob Gilbert ([27:32](#)):

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