

Bob Gilbert (00:09):

Welcome to Tourism Heads and Their Tales, 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, who are bringing you this podcast series. I've had the privilege to have worked with iconic global brands, including Disney Choice Hotels, Yosemite and Shenandoah National Parks, Kennedy Space Center, visitor Center, and Best Western International. Plus, served on the boards of the US Travel Association National Tour Association, and an elected commissioner for Visit California. Looking forward, I will be chatting with those that are helping shape the travel and tourism industry, all with unique tales to share that I know you will find both interesting and educational. So without further ado, let's get started. Welcome to Tourism Heads and Their Tales today. We have a great guest. I'm really looking forward to having a great conversation, and it's a great story. So my question to Tom Garzelli, who is the CMO at Brand usa, how the heck does a kid from the Bronx end up as the chief marketing officer for the world's best country? How, how, tell me the story here, Tom.

Tom Garzelli (01:37):

Well, first of all, it's great to be with you, Bob, and thanks for thinking about me and I'm, I'm honored to be on your show and I will say, as I say to a lot of people, I'm, I'm very fortunate. I feel like I have maybe the best job in tourism. But yeah, I grew up in the travel business, started, you know, as a kid. My dad was a hotelier when I was very young as a, and then he got into the wholesale and retail travel business, and I kind of followed him into that and then went from his business to American Express where I learned a lot. And then, you know, ultimately got into my own kind of destination marketing business and, and then had the good fortune of timing and relationships to have known Chris Thompson, um, in my previous life. And when he became c e o of Brand u s a, he gave me an opportunity to come and help build out, uh, which was to become the nation's D M O. And it's been a amazing journey and I, it's, it's hard to believe it's about to be 10 years, uh, in March of, uh, or this coming March I'll be, I'll be 10 years of brand u s a, so,

Bob Gilbert (02:40):

Wow. It's hard to believe that once upon a time our country's marketing was left in the hands of the government. I think, you know, go back to the days of u s Tta a you know, we've, as they say, baby, we've come a long way, <laugh>. Um, so tell me how the, how brand U s A came to to be. What is the backstory there?

Tom Garzelli (03:04):

Well, ultimately, and really, uh, it starts with US travel and their amazing work back in the kind of post nine 11 world where the US lost a tremendous amount of market share as the world was coming back to traveling. And of course, it's a combination of that, and a combination of the world was opening up to airplanes everywhere. And the Travel Promotion Act of, uh, I wanna say it was 2010 originally became the, uh, 2011 signed by President Obama, created brand u s a and created the creating the funding mechanism for brand u s a as importantly and the mission of brand u s a. And so, it, it officially started in 2011. Chris came in as a C E O in, in November of 2012. And since then, it's, it's been building the mission of the, of the organization is very straightforward. It's to create, build incremental inbound visitation from around the world into the usa and to do it in a widespread way to take into account rural and urban and the diverse and different experiences that the entire country has to offer. And it's a great

mission. It's, it's pretty big challenge, but it's also the only way you really can grow market share, which is to really create new places and new stories and really spread out new business.

Bob Gilbert ([04:31](#)):

So as we look at the world, which has changed a lot over the last few years due to the pandemic and is still evolving, we look at the financial implications and, you know, we see that the US is not the only country that has inflation challenges. In fact, we are probably better off than many countries in Europe and other parts of the world. How has Brand USA strategy changed as a result of the pandemic and things that are out of brand USA's control, you know, which is government rules and regulations on Covid masks, or not masks, you know, the management of that. How has that impacted how Brand USA markets the USA Today?

Tom Garzelli ([05:15](#)):

Well, to answer, I would just take a step back and say that we really see two very distinct parts of the mission, and one is the consumer piece, which we can talk a little bit about. But the other one, which is really just as important and an, and a critical part of it is our whole trade engagement and our stake, what we call stakeholder amplification, which is to help destinations that have already been out in the markets, add value to their efforts, amplify their efforts, and also lower barriers of entry to new places, less resourced places or lesser known places. And in that regard, as we went into the pandemic, that second piece, the connections of helping our stakeholder destination partners connect with tour operators and travel agents and buyers around the world, that is what we really focused on through covid. It was the thing we could do because we really weren't doing consumer advertising obviously at the time mm-hmm. <affirmative>.

Tom Garzelli ([06:12](#)):

So that work accelerated. We developed new tools, virtual platform to do things, you know, a lot of, a lot of Zoom conferences and webinars and trainings and things like that. On the consumer side, what I would say is that if you think about where we sit, we are so separated really from the consumer. We do know bookings or commerce, and we're even more separated from the consumer than let's say, your state ds. We live very much in the inspirational space, very much in the, you know, dreaming and, and learning phases. And so that to a large degree hasn't changed because ultimately what we're doing is trying to remind everyone why they love the usa, why they all dream of coming here, and how much there is to do when you come here. And so we, you know, we've been through other recessions and other economic cycles in this process, and what we've done is just try to remind everyone that the value of a vacation here and how much more you can do and how much more you can get for your money. But in the end, it's about just continually inspiring people through our storytelling, through our different channels to just keep dreaming about coming here and then slowly moving them down the funnel.

Bob Gilbert ([07:31](#)):

Yeah. What you were saying about focusing on the trade as opposed to the consumer, obviously there are limits to budgets, and if there is a smaller destination, it doesn't really make a lot of sense to go to the UK or Germany to spend money primarily on consumer because you're not gonna be able to afford it. And if you put an ad out, then there's one ad and you know, then the next day you're forgotten again. So that, um, the relationship with the trade is really, really important. How do you communicate with the trade? Obviously, you put on events and you have your own offices. So this is a two part question, the communication piece and the second piece, how the market is recovering. Uh, are there parts of the

international community that are bouncing back faster than others? Um, what is your read on the current status?

Tom Garzelli ([08:27](#)):

Um, so yeah, so the, the first one, just in terms of communication, I mean, we use a lot of, what I like to think of is, you know, the traditional tools like, you know, fan trips and training, and we have a u s A discovery training program that has been in place for many years. And then, you know, as we approached 2020, we did also launch things like Travel Week, which was our own way of connecting our destination partners with buyers, primarily in Europe, as you know, Bob, you have a, a lot of these big global trade shows that are very expensive, that are very, just very large and hard to make a difference. And so we felt it was important for the US to be able to, you know, offer a different kind of experience, a different kind of value, and to bring important buyers together with our stakeholders.

Tom Garzelli ([09:16](#)):

So, so we did that. And then because as we, we had that going into the pandemic, we had to come up with a virtual way to keep that going. So we built a virtual platform, the brand u s a global marketplace that we used first to have those events during the pandemic, and now we do it to add value in between the live events. In fact, today we're having, uh, a set of one-on-one appointments on the virtual platform that is a, an add-on from our travel week, our live travel week that we did in Frankfurt in October. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. And again, we love doing things live and face-to-face and they're really important. But when you're, when you're trying to cover the world and you're trying to, to match a lot of people together, these virtual tools are invaluable part of doing that. So, so we use all of those tools.

Tom Garzelli ([10:05](#)):

We just, we launched a podcast early in the year, again, just just meant to target our stakeholders to kind of keep them abreast of what we're doing and what some of our partners are doing. So keeping the bridges built, keeping the lights on in markets around the world has been really important in terms of recovery. The world is starting to come back, airplanes are starting to fly, have been from more and more cities. So as capacity comes back, so does the visitation really, it's pretty strong everywhere. I mean, Mexico and Canada was just waiting for borders to open and they've been flocking back. And then Europe opened about a year ago, and now the rest of the world is too. And I'd say other than China, all of our main markets are opening back up and, you know, it's still gonna take a couple of years to get back to our pre pandemic, you know, visitation numbers. 2019, we were in the 80 million visitors range, probably won't see that again until late 23 or end of 24, but it's coming back steadily and we just keep doing what we can do to keep the bridges built and the, and the relationship strong, and then continue to be out inspiring consumers around the world.

Bob Gilbert ([11:23](#)):

So as a result of the pandemic, there was, uh, omnibus spending bill, that part of which was the Restoring brand U USA Act that allocated, I think it was 250 million mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, how correct, how is that going to be spent? And you know, obviously that's gonna take time to roll out, but what, what are the key hallmarks of that funding targeted?

Tom Garzelli ([11:51](#)):

Sure. We were thrilled to have that happen. It was, uh, restored brand U s a act, which gave us 200 million with no nothing attached. And then there's another 50 million that we can unlock with matching

dollars similar to how we unlock our est of funds in a normal year. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, and of course, the Travel promotion fund is funded by the esta funds, and we can unlock on a normal year up to a hundred million a year, as long as we bring an equal amount of dollars in matching that fund. You know, went from being well over a hundred million a year to about 13 million in 2021 and less than that in 22, and now is starting to inch back up. And so that the Restore brand u s A funds will fill in for that so that we can have what looks like a normal year and in the next couple of years, you know, also adding something to that to accelerate our work in market.

Bob Gilbert ([12:46](#)):

So let's paint a picture, uh, scenario. I, you know, I'm a small destination. I believe that I have an opportunity to leverage international visitation. How do I go about it as a mid-size cvb? Do I go to my state? Do I come directly to Brand U usa? What, what is the best way? Yeah. And, and what are the programs that Brand USA has available?

Tom Garzelli ([13:13](#)):

So I, I would say the answer to that question depends a lot on where your destination is and what state you're part of and how involved they are. But, but I would say we work at all of those levels. We work directly with big and small destinations. We are happy to work through the state and add value that way. So I would just say in general, answering that question, there are a lot of tools that we've developed that are meant to lower those barriers of entry. As you know, before you get into a market, there's a lot of information you need to have, there's a lot of research you want to do. You wanna understand all the different aspects of that market, who the tour operators are, how to connect with them. In the past, you had to spend a lot of money to do that before you went into a market.

Tom Garzelli ([13:59](#)):

And what we're trying to do at Brand U s A is provide those kinds of foundational tools. We do that again using our virtual global marketplace. We have our international pavilion that we launched at the beginning of this year, which provides an opportunity for destinations to go in, look at a country, uk, Ireland, India, wherever that they're interested in, and really have access to research and information and uh, market updates, a database of who the journalists are, who the tour operators are, who the big travel agents are, so that you have all that information and you haven't had to invest in that. So that the dollars you invest are when you really decide then to go in and market. And hopefully we can add some value to that as well through a number of our co-op programs, our different multi-channel programs. Again, our, our in market, our our sales missions and other training opportunities. So a lot of it depends on just, you know, what level a destination is and what markets are important to them. And we always think of, you know, one person's, uh, mature market is another person's emerging market. It just depends on <laugh> who they are. Yeah. And we try to support at all levels of size as far as a destination is concerned. And we try to support at all levels of need as the markets are concerned.

Bob Gilbert ([15:25](#)):

Right. And it ultimately, it is down to the destination to do their homework. What are the points of interest that's gonna be relevant to a particular traveler? As an example, obviously one can go after the Canadian market, but they tend to stay shorter because they're just across the, the border. Sure. Whereas visitors who come in from Australia Benmore because they stay longer, because it takes, you know, 14 hours over however many hours to fly into the us. So I guess what you are saying is that all of that information with the resources are available, but ultimately you can't do the destination's work for

them. They have to make sure that they know where to go to look for international. And the starting point is with your website and the resources there.

Tom Garzelli ([16:13](#)):

Correct. I mean, we feel we want to be able to offer and have available all of those tools. Obviously it's for a destination to decide to utilize those. But we also, you know, we also get more involved with particular destinations if they want to, and mm-hmm. <affirmative>, we also work a lot with the regional marketing groups, you know, so we're working at each level and just trying to add value depending upon what the need is.

Bob Gilbert ([16:41](#)):

So when you say regional marketing groups, not the state tourism offices, but more travel south, et cetera, that those kinds of, uh,

Tom Garzelli ([16:49](#)):

Regional groups? Correct. But I would say, I mean that's such a great example. We, we have a tremendous relationship with Travel South. They've been hugely supportive of brand U s A and we try to reciprocate and support their efforts and we're big believers in that kind of storytelling. At the same time, there's states in Travel South, like Kentucky for example, that we just did a very big deep program with over the last year cuz they wanted to focus on some very specific things. And then we go and work with, you know, Owensboro, Kentucky to create awareness of a small beyond the gateway kind of place. So we work with all of those levels. It just depends again on, you know, who those they are and what their need and how interested they are in, you know, working with us.

Bob Gilbert ([17:37](#)):

Right. And let me ask you this question in terms of, and it's kind of related kind of understanding and going through due diligence, but understanding the market one wants to go after and one tries to identify trends. And you know, I remember way back in the day before the internet <laugh> in one of the trends, and this was all on paper vouchers. I'm not, I guess I'm aging myself here, but the f i t fly drive was, uh, and we've seen iterations of that and evolve over the years. Are there any trends that destinations should be looking out for at this moment in time? Is the pandemic, uh, changed people's dreaming and ideation and itinerary planning? Are there any themes that we should be looking out for that will impact destinations? Obviously it's not gonna, you know, it's not a one size fits all for us, but is there, are there any trends, emerging trends that you see from markets?

Tom Garzelli ([18:36](#)):

Uh, yeah. I would say that we, you can imagine as people are now coming back, um, wanting to do more with their trips, you know, getting beyond gateways, longer trips, more, more road trips, outdoors types of experiences. But at the same time, people are much more interested in our evolving and amazing food scene, our culture, music, you know, these are all pillars that we've focused on. We now also, you know, we do a lot around sorts and that's something that appeals to a lot of people. What's interesting about what, when we think about these things is there are trends that a particular destination would be more focused on than us. Our job is to try to let them know what all these different things are, but ultimately just the same way, as I said to you, that one person's mature market is another person's emerging market.

Tom Garzelli (19:30):

You know, we market everything from Las Vegas and Orlando and Universal and Disney to the smallest towns. And we just did a show on the Catskills and we do, uh, one of our shows, which is Small Towns big story that's on Go U S A T V, one of the episodes around Ice harvest in, uh, south Bristol, Maine, one and Emmy. And, you know, people are interested in all of these things. And we focus on all of these trends and we focus on, on trying again, to share information with our stakeholders and let them decide the trend towards sustainability. That definitely speaks to a lot of our country, but maybe not all of our country or the trend toward road trips or the great outdoors versus music and food and culture. So these are all things that are interesting to big groups of travelers. We as brand USA have to kind of appeal to all of those things and then we inform our stakeholders on all of it, and they can decide to focus on, you know, a more narrow set of that

Bob Gilbert (20:42):

Audience. Right. So your job is to fuel intent, basically. So that top of the funnel space, you know, which I guess leads to the inspirational piece and then the intent, and then provide that then to others that kind of get into the, the weeds, because you can't get into the weeds. It just, it just doesn't make sense. Plus, it, it's not necessarily your responsibility either. Right.

Tom Garzelli (21:08):

Well, and I, you know, I feel like for us to pick one or two key trends or key pillars is in some ways potentially limiting the places we can talk about. Because not every place has a beach. Not every place has mountains or skiing or national parks or, so we need to talk about all of those things and we need to do it, um, in a, in a really wide, broad way. But I also, again, I think that's what fuels the opportunity to grow market because that's what makes people come that third, fourth, fifth time, right? Yeah. After they've seen the iconic. So it's all, you know, it, it, it's all part of, of how we view our role in that travel cycle.

Bob Gilbert (21:50):

Right. And I, and I think that historically, I I, I'll take the UK market, it's a market I'm <laugh> very familiar with, but, you know, folks used to come visit New York or Florida, they'd, it'd be a beach vacation, they'd go home, they'd come back again and they became more adventurous. And so the more repeat visitation from the uk, the more adventurous they get in the car and they do, they go cross country, uh, or at least from a regional perspective to begin with. And, and then, you know, discover more. And, and I guess that's the evolution of a mature market and they kind of drill down to more specifics such as, you know, the foodie scene or Nashville, Memphis, you know, the music trails, civil Rights trail. I mean, so it really does become very fragmented, which makes it a little tougher perhaps for newcomers to the international stage to kind of get in and get involved and to be relevant. But I really admired what Brand USA has done with, you mentioned it just now with the ice harvesting in Maine, small town, big story. And I think your first big screen, giant screen documentary was National Park Different, not mistaken. Um, correct. And, and then there was the music, um, can't remember the third one.

Tom Garzelli (23:13):

The third one is, is a sim it's a return to kind of the great outdoors, but a little bit more, uh, just a little bit different spin and a little different storytelling around that.

Bob Gilbert (23:24):

But, but they're, I mean, they were full on Hollywood productions. Yeah. You know, it's being bold, being big or go home. Right. And it, it makes a difference. It gets noticed, which again, is, is the purpose. Right. But one question, which of the giant screen documentaries have been the most popular and what do you have up your sleeves for for the next small screen to the silver screen

Tom Garzelli ([23:47](#)):

<laugh>? Yeah, well thanks for that question. So yeah, we launched our first giant screen film National Parks Adventure in 2016, which was during the hundredth anniversary of the National Parks Service. Yeah. And that was certainly the most popular of the three to date. It still shows in theaters. It was the highest grossing giant screen documentary of 2016, uh, wow. Worldwide. And that was very much a subject and very much aligned with how we were distributing the film was through museums and science centers, primarily around the world. And that led to us wanting to tell an urban story a more in, in the city music culture. So that led to America's musical journey. It was not as strongly viewed in the theaters, but then was very popular online. You know, Netflix carried it for three years. And as you know, that probably that, you know, Netflix doesn't really share viewership in numbers.

Tom Garzelli ([24:49](#)):

Right. But we know that the numbers were really strong and, and so outside of theaters, that film has a lot of popularity. And then the third film into America's Wild, we premiered in February of 2020, about three weeks before everything shut down. So it is only now just being re kind of re-released, if you will. And that film also, by the way, is narrated by Morgan Freeman, the, the the second and third films narrated by Morgan Freeman, first film by Robert Redford. That film is amazing. You can't see that one online yet. That one's just in theaters. That will be a popular one. And, and the thing about these films is they continue to show on and on, and they have a very long shelf life. The, the first film is what gave Rise to the reality that we also needed a TV channel. Because you just realize when you look at the, the number of stories, the amount of places we need to talk about, and the reality that, you know, you can talk about six or eight places, well, in a film, we needed a way to, to push out many more stories, which is why we created Go U S A T V in 2018 and really curate a lot of content from production partners.

Tom Garzelli ([26:05](#)):

Destinations will provide us great content. There's a few amazing movies on the channel that were provided to us by Nashville and a few other, uh, places. And also we create a lot of our own original content, one of which is Small Towns Big story, but there are a number of others. And you know, we just try to go out and tell authentic stories to as many different places as we can. And during the pandemic we spent a lot of that downtime taking advantage of the fact that streaming TV in these last two or three years has changed dramatically. And we are now on a, not just on like an app driven distribution like Apple, Amazon, fire, and Roku. We're now on a lot of the vast networks like Zoomo and Plex and also being built into Samsung and LG sets. Huh. So, you know, the whole streaming TV business has changed dramatically and our content has been very popular. You can't buy onto those networks. They have to accept your content and they really like our content. So that's what's really the main focus right now as building out as many different stories with as many different storytellers as we can.

Bob Gilbert ([27:24](#)):

I guess ultimately it is about storytelling, whether you're a small destination or you are a, a country and who tells the best story and has the best distribution and has the most relevance wins. Uh, we started out the conversation today talking about market share. And we saw what happened when we weren't in

the market. We lost market share, hence the creation of Brand USA as borders are reopening, people are traveling, who's our main competition? Who's out there that you would consider to be our comp, I'll use a hotel term, our, our competitive set. Who, who out there is not spending money and, and trying to steal our customers <laugh> or potential pro, uh, potential customers?

Tom Garzelli ([28:13](#)):

Yeah, I think to some degree it depends again on which country, right? Because wherever, you know, it depends on what part of the world you are. There's always, you know, I think, I think what the bigger competitive set for us is, you know, in any given country, people staying local or people you know, definitely the pandemic as it did here in the USA it did around the world, gives rise to a lot more local travel. And that's not to say we don't look at particular destinations and what they're doing, but I, what I will say for the USA is that each country that we look at in our competitive set has a set of things that you can do there uniquely in the USA it's the only place where you can do all of those things almost within the same trip, right. Whether it's culture or food or outdoor skiing or laying on the beach. You can almost do all of those things in one trip and that's something you can do in a lot of other countries. But I think what we tend to focus on is looking at each country and what's happening around capacity, what's happening around their local, uh, they're a local economy, their local movement of travel, and try to ramp up our storytelling accordingly. Um, we don't spend a lot of time looking at what others are doing because we, it's just, it's not a comparison.

Bob Gilbert ([29:39](#)):

Right. We let the others worry about us <laugh>.

Tom Garzelli ([29:43](#)):

Yeah. And that, I don't mean that in an arrogant way, I just mean it in a way that it's hard for me to look at. We have so much to talk about and we have to focus on so many different stakeholders and experiences and that's what we really focus on. And we, and we let the consumer kind of decide what of those things are inspiring them and uh, try to pull them down the funnel. That's really what we focus on.

Bob Gilbert ([30:09](#)):

Right. How, how, um, you know, we spoke about inflation and, uh, financial situations in different parts of the world, including ours. How affordable are we now? What does the, the pound get you here? What does the the euro,

Tom Garzelli ([30:24](#)):

I think we're still a value experience mm-hmm. If you will, at whatever level of spending, whether you're a luxury traveler or, you know, less So. I think a lot of it is about the breadth of experience that you can have once you decide to get on that plane and come here. I think in that regard, we're always a good value. And I will say, I think regardless of, there's no question that, that some of these headwinds are challenges to people deciding to take trips, but they are traveling and they want to travel. And that overall desire combined with a really pent up demand of a couple of years of not traveling, I feel like this last year demand was not the issue. It was really capacity. We'll have to be careful about looking at that as we go forward. There, I'm sure will be some headwinds, but again, I I, I think we have a lot to offer and people will spend their money and get a lot for it. Right. Um, when they come.

Bob Gilbert ([31:24](#)):

What are our top source markets now in terms of, obviously these are general terms, but Sure. What's our, our top five or the UK Germany, uh, I know they've positions have changed over the years, um, you know, based on various things, but yeah,

Tom Garzelli (31:41):

It's been fairly consistent though. You know, first of all, obviously Canada and Mexico, you know, make up a, a majority of the, the visitation for obvious reasons. Yeah. And they continue to be, you know, the, the largest over from an overseas perspective, the UK and then a number of European countries. And we tend to look at, obviously we do focus on UK and Germany and a and a few of the other primary markets. I also think of Europe in many ways. We look at it as a singular market because you have a lot of movement across Europe through a handful of gateways into the US. And so it's not just you know, it's not just UK and Germany now. I mean Ireland, France, Spain, Italy, Netherlands, all important markets and coming all coming back. All lights are, you know, from, from all of those places.

Tom Garzelli (32:33):

And they're strong. But then also places like Australia and Korea and Japan are starting to really ramp back up. And we have our efforts there, we have our offices there and we are gonna be doing consumer in those markets. Brazil. So, I mean, I think I mentioned pretty much all of 'em. The only couple that are, you know, our next are India. Again, you have to wait for the lift really to happen. And then China has its own set of challenges mm-hmm. <affirmative> beyond our control. Right. But under normal circumstances, China from a spend perspective would be up up in the top five.

Bob Gilbert (33:13):

Yeah. But certainly, you know, when I was speaking with, uh, with Carolyn Betta from Visit California, that, you know, that that was one that she's holding her breath on because again, it was a huge market for California and huge for the US in general. But there are certain things that are beyond our control, as you said, Tom. So, yeah. So, um, couple of last questions. Marketing the USA brand USA's perspective through your lens, what keeps you up at night?

Tom Garzelli (33:41):

You know, I think it's a couple of things, um, that I think a lot about is one is the challenge that we are gonna continue to have of getting our medium small out of the gateway products better connected to the buyers around the world and in front of consumers. So, you know, thinking about the idea that I think we do a good job of telling stories and inspiring people we have to do and find more ways to get more product into the marketplace. And the other is just making sure that we're ready to get into markets as they open up and that we're fully functional on the ground and we're doing that. We're also building back our own business, right? So we've added almost doubled in size in the last nine months or so, getting back to our pre pandemic levels of the team. So there's, that's a big, yeah, that's a big challenge as well. Okay. Cause you want to make sure you're bringing in great people and we are bringing in just an amazing new class of team members. So excited about that.

Bob Gilbert (34:46):

That that is exciting. You know, and I think it certainly warrants huge congratulations on the support that you have from the political side of the equation. The demonstrated that with the Restoring Brand USA Act and those relationships up in the hill are very important to have those folks communicated to,

and I know you do a great job in that. My pen, ultimate question, obviously the I P W is a huge event. When and where is that taking place? In, uh, 23

Tom Garzelli (35:21):

I p w is in San Antonio. Ah, in, uh, you caught me a little bit. I can look it up. Uh, that's okay. In late May. I don't, I don't. Um,

Bob Gilbert (35:29):

But it's in San Antonio was the real, um, and normally my Yes,

Tom Garzelli (35:33):

It's, and we're excited about that. I think a lot of people are excited to have that new experience. So that's gonna be interesting. And of course that's a US travel event Yep. That we very much support because that's the only time that the world comes to the usa. By the way, that's San Antonio May 20 to 24 Of 2020.

Bob Gilbert (35:57):

Perfect. Perfect.

Tom Garzelli (35:57):

And what I, if, if it's okay, I wanted to just grab onto the last thing you were saying about our public sector support. I have to say that the other wonderful experience of being art of Brand USA has been to see the amazing support that we've gotten from everyone really the industry itself, through the destinations, the attractions, airlines, all of our partners who have really decided early on that this had to succeed and they did everything they could to support us. Of course, us travel, to your point about our great support in, in Congress, that is a lot about us travel and their ongoing efforts mm-hmm. <affirmative> to represent the, the, the industry and represent, you know, brand U S A and what brand U s A does for industry. So it's been truly a team effort of a big, big widespread team and our support from the industry around the world who really love selling America and really wanna learn more and more about what places to sell.

Bob Gilbert (36:57):

Last question, what do you see for the future of visitation visitors marketing the usa? What do you see in 23 and beyond?

Tom Garzelli (37:10):

23 to, in 24 is a big rebound of visitation to the US from, you know, a broad set of countries as again, capacity comes back and people get back into their normal lives. We are very optimistic about getting back to pre pandemic levels and surpassing them somewhere in around 2024. The five year goal of the, the N TTO is for us to reach 90 million visitors by the end of 2027. So that is, you know, that's what we're looking forward to doing and, and all of our efforts are gonna be focused on trying to do that.

Bob Gilbert (37:50):

Fantastic. So that's why you need more product, right, <laugh>?

Tom Garzelli ([37:54](#)):

Well, that's right. I mean, that is a big part of it. And again, as you know, you've been in various businesses, you know, that have had to expand their product to get people coming back. Yeah. And we have amazing gateways. We have amazing iconic places. We do a lot of work with all of them. That is what really fuels the initial inspiration to come here. But we have to get people continuing to feel like, I haven't seen all of the usa I have to get back. And that's what our storytelling tries to inspire.

Bob Gilbert ([38:27](#)):

Well, you've been a great storyteller today on tourism heads and their tales. Tom, thank you so much. You've been fantastic, and I wish you continued success. Well,

Tom Garzelli ([38:37](#)):

Thank you so much, and thanks for inviting me. I appreciate it. I really enjoyed talking to you. Hope we do it again soon.

Bob Gilbert ([38:42](#)):

I look forward to it. Thank you very much, Tom. We hope you enjoyed today's episode. Please like thumbs up, subscribe and leave a review. You can also visit [eddyalexander.com](http://eddyalexander.com) to learn more about our tourism, marketing, and destination management services, and read some of our recent case studies. Finally, if you'd like to suggest future guests or podcast discussion topics or to sign up to get an email alert when we drop new episodes, please do [so@eddiealexander.com](mailto:so@eddiealexander.com) slash t h a t t.