BRAND USA

NEWS RELEASE

Brand USA President & CEO Christopher L. Thompson to receive “Top 25” honor at HSMAI’s Adrian Awards Gala

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Most Extraordinary Leaders in Sales and Marketing Recognized as part of Tenth Annual List

The Hospitality Sales & Marketing Association International (HSMAI) has selected Brand USA President & CEO Christopher L. Thompson as one of the “Top 25 Most Extraordinary Minds in Sales and Marketing” for 2012.

The tenth annual list recognizes the “best of the best” in the hospitality, travel and tourism industries. Recipients will be honored during a private ceremony preceding the Adrian Awards Gala on Jan. 28, 2013, at the New York Marriott Marquis and will be recognized at the Adrian Awards dinner reception and gala.

The 2012 “Top 25” recipients were judged by a panel of senior industry executives for their recent work based on the following criteria: creativity and innovation; cutting edge sales or marketing campaigns; triumph in challenging situations; and sales efforts that resulted in dramatic gains.

“The ‘Top 25’ is our annual hot list that celebrates the sales, marketing and revenue management leaders and innovators in our industry,” said Robert A. Gilbert, CHME, CHBA, president and CEO of HSMAI. “The creative strategies, passionate dedication and sharp intelligence of these professionals have not only grown the business within their organizations but have also truly raised the bar for the hospitality industry as a whole.”

Throughout his career, Thompson has been honored with a number of industry awards and recognized for numerous accomplishments, including being previously named one of the "Top 25 Most Extraordinary Minds in Sales & Marketing" by HSMAI in 2009.

Thompson joined Brand USA in November 2012 following a stellar career at VISIT FLORIDA, one of the nation’s most successful destination marketing organizations. He succeeded Caroline Beteta, who has been interim president of the organization since June 21, 2012, in addition to her role as president and CEO of Visit California and her role on the Brand USA board of directors.

Thompson has nearly three decades of experience in the tourism industry. In his most recent role as president and CEO of VISIT FLORIDA, he led the organization’s growth and success in a number of areas, including exponential year over year record growth, numerous operational and marketing awards, and extensive international tourism expertise.

In his role as president & CEO of Brand USA, Thompson is concentrating on accelerating the organization’s efforts on building and executing effective marketing strategies to increase inbound travel to the United States, resulting in increased U.S. exports and increased employment. These programs consist of marketing, public relations, and partnership programs critical to the overall marketing of the United States as the world’s premier travel destination, as well as communications programs to provide travelers with vital information that inspires and makes it easier to explore the vast range of experiences and destinations available in the U.S.A.

Thompson was one of the industry leaders who helped lead the effort to gain support for the passage of the Travel Promotion Act, which was signed into law in March 2010. He subsequently became a key member of the task force charged with guiding the launch of the Corporation for Travel Promotion created by the Act (and which today does business as Brand USA).

He began his career in tourism with the Division of Tourism in the former Florida Department of Commerce in April 1983. He was appointed bureau chief over domestic tourism in April 1986 and in November 1988 joined the Leon County (Florida) Tourist Development Council as the organization’s first executive director. In April 1991, Thompson took leadership of the Tallahassee (Florida) Area Convention and Visitors Bureau as president and CEO.

In August 1995, Thompson founded MarketServe, Inc., a professional management, marketing and planning services company based in Tallahassee, Fla. Two years later, he joined VISIT FLORIDA as senior vice president, partner development and was promoted to chief operating officer in May 2003. In May 2009, he was named the organization's president and chief executive officer where he led VISIT FLORIDA's impressive growth on a local, state, national, and international level.

An active member of the community and the industry, Thompson is a Certified Destination Management Executive and currently serves as a member or board member of some of a number of influential business and travel industry associations and organizations, including the Travel and Tourism Advisory Board of the U.S. Department of Commerce, the U.S. Travel Association, Destination Marketing Association International, the Association of Travel Marketing Executives, International SKAL, the Southeast Tourism Society, and the Travel and Tourism Advisory Council, Miami Branch of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta.

Thompson earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from the University of Florida in 1980. He and his wife, Susan, have two grown sons, Christopher and James.

In addition to celebrating Thompson's achievements, the gala will recognize the top achievements in advertising, digital marketing and public relations in the hospitality, travel and tourism industries with an Adrian Award. In addition, lifetime achievement honors and Gold Adrian Award winners will be celebrated at the Adrian Awards Gala Dinner Reception, which is co-sponsored by HSMAI and Expedia Media Solutions.

Thompson will also be featured in an HSMAI publication and receive a personalized plaque.

About HSMAI

The Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMAI) is committed to growing business for hotels and their partners, and is the industry's leading advocate for intelligent, sustainable hotel revenue growth. The association provides hotel professionals & their partners with tools, insights, and expertise to fuel sales, inspire marketing, and optimize revenue through programs such as HSMAI's MEET, Adrian Awards, and Revenue Optimization Conference. HSMAI is an individual membership organization comprising more than 7,000 members worldwide, with 40 chapters in the Americas Region. Connect with HSMAI at www.hsmai.org, www.facebook.com/hsmai, www.twitter.com/hsmai and www.youtube.com/hsmai1.

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About Brand USA
Brand USA is the nation's destination marketing organization, dedicated to attracting legitimate international inbound travel to strengthen the U.S. economy, increase exports, create quality jobs, and promote community prosperity. By running data-driven campaigns and unifying messaging across industry and government, Brand USA positions the United States as a top global destination while providing current visa and entry information.

Over the past 13 years Brand USA has driven 11.3 million additional international visitors who spent $38.1 billion in the United States, leading to $82.9 billion in total economic impact and sustaining an average of more than 40,000 jobs each year. These efforts have generated nearly $11 billion in attributable tax receipts at the federal, state, and local levels.