



## **Conference Report**

### **Smart Meetings – Monterey, CA**

**November 5 – 7, 2023**

#### **Montana Representation:**

- Western Montana's Glacier Country – Debbie Picard

#### **Overview:**

- Smart Meetings is a hosted buyer, appointment-only, reverse trade show. I chose to attend this one in Monterey CA to meet with California meeting planners and was hoping it would draw quite a few of those planners with its convenient location. I had never been to a Smart Meetings planned event but had heard great things about the quality of planners that they invite.
- Smart Meetings does a great job of vetting out active corporate, association, independent and third-party planners to attend the show.
- Western Montana's Glacier Country was matched with 22 buyers (with 1 no-show, which is understandable today) for 10-minute appointments.
- Only three or four planners I met with had ever been to Montana before, and only one had sourced a meeting, which was in Big Sky.
- We increased our database with 15 new meeting planners.
- No RFPs were given to me at the show, but several will follow up with meetings they think would be good fits for Western Montana.

#### **Appointments and projected ROI:**

Quite a few of the planners were looking for smaller corporate incentives or retreat locations. I connected with them on their corporate incentive needs with our luxury guest ranches and resort towns and explained about our convention hotel properties for association business if they had any. Several appointments had regional meetings in the 100-person range, which is perfect for most of our convention hotels in our three hub cities. This show has great networking outside of the appointments, and the suppliers were treated well. Usually, everything is centered around the planners, but Marin knows that if she treats the suppliers well, the meetings will succeed. I have followed up with all the planners via email and will have to see about ROI.

#### **Recommendations for 2024:**

- I plan to attend another Smart Meetings show in 2024 to continue the momentum. I will check in on their website to see where they are being held and pick one that works with my schedule and has the most potential for quality meeting planners to attend and the potential for producing the best ROI. I liked this show and the quality of the planners that attended. It takes consistency and continued exposure to build relationships with meeting planners, and I feel that this happened at this show. It gave Western Montana great exposure to quality meeting planners who are looking for our unique properties.