



## **DISCOVER PUERTO RICO SHARES KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM INDUSTRY LEADERS DURING VIRTUAL PANEL ON LESSONS IN CRISIS AND RECOVERY**

*Experts from Cruise Lines International Association, Destinations International, Marriott International and COR3 joined Discover Puerto Rico to discuss insights and the future of travel and tourism*

**San Juan, Puerto Rico, April 1, 2021** – [Discover Puerto Rico](#), the Island’s Destination Marketing Organization (DMO), held a virtual panel on “Lessons in Crisis and Recovery” yesterday, March 31, with local Puerto Rican broadcast personality, Armando Valdés Prieto, moderating the discussion. The panel was comprised of key industry leaders including Anne Madison, SVP, Global Marketing & Strategic Communications at Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA); Diana Plazas, CSMO Caribbean & Latin America at Marriott International; Don Welsh, President & CEO of Destinations International; and Manuel Laboy, Executive Director at COR3, Central Office of Recovery, Reconstruction & Resiliency, who joined Jose M. Suarez, Board of Directors Chairman, Discover Puerto Rico.

From hurricanes, to political unrest, earthquakes and global pandemic, the demonstrated success of Discover Puerto Rico’s robust recovery strategies, crisis preparedness planning and overwhelming agility have paved the way for a successful rebound following adversity. These experiences and learnings applied within the organization inspired the panel to convene and reflect on the important tactics and strides made following a year of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

“There is nothing more critical than learning from the challenges COVID-19 has presented for our industry, and sharing them for the global travel and tourism community to collectively look to the future with takeaways that help lay a foundation for recovery,” said Brad Dean, CEO of Discover Puerto Rico. “This incredible group of decorated professionals openly discussing their experiences was both inspiring and an essential reminder of what we’ve gained, and not just what we lost.”

Key themes shared by the panelists included the importance of crisis preparedness, with scenario planning as a critical tactic implemented by CLIA, Marriott International and Discover Puerto Rico. “Regardless of how up-to-date your crisis manual is - without scenario planning and debriefing after crises to enhance and build upon those learnings, you have nothing,” said Anne Madison from CLIA. It was through a robust Crisis Preparedness Playbook that Discover Puerto Rico was also able to have clearly identified next steps based on potential scenarios, with respective team members understanding their roles, as explained by Jose M. Suarez of the DMO.

Transparency, constant communication, and agility also reigned supreme as priorities during the pandemic, and something each panelist shared should remain in the future. “Communication, adaptability and responding with real, relevant and timely information was the best thing we could do” said Don Welsh, President & CEO of Destinations International, whose organization held 64 webinars during the pandemic’s peak to provide crucial information to the global industry. Manuel Laboy of COR3, who worked closely with stakeholders as a local government official, shared that maintaining constant communication with the local Puerto Rican business community was essential to balance the health crisis with the pandemic’s economic impact.

Data and research equally remain at the center of the panelists’ organizations as they look to the future. CLIA, for example, increased frequency of sentiment tracking to better understand message resonance, while economic data demonstrating the impact of cruising was also utilized at key moments in time. It is through data that Discover Puerto Rico is also forming appropriate marketing campaigns that keep the destination top of mind, while targeting responsible travelers to continue safeguarding residents and

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visitors. Diana Plazas of Marriott International specifically highlighted the use of digital tools to gather research, inclusive of how the global hotel company is leveraging their mobile app to hear from guests. “This is here to stay,” she said.

While strategies and tactic implementation varied among the speakers, an overarching agreement of the travel industry’s future – despite uncertainty – remained clear. “Travel is part of the human DNA... nothing can replace the real experience of travel,” said Don Welsh of Destinations International, who shared the insight that even amid the pandemic’s height, many planned trips understanding that they would be cancelled. “Resiliency has a new meaning after COVID-19” continued Manuel Laboy of COR3, “and it also needs to have a new purpose that connects to the visitor experience – and that is progress.”

The virtual panel recording will be available for public access on the Discover Puerto Rico [YouTube](#) and [Industry Portal](#) starting Friday, April 2.

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Discover Puerto Rico is a newly established private, not for-profit Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) whose mission is to make Puerto Rico visible to the world as a premier travel destination. The DMO brings prosperity to the people of Puerto Rico by collaboratively promoting the Island's diversity and uniqueness for leisure and business travel, and events. It is responsible for all global marketing, sales and promotion of the destination and works collaboratively with key local governmental and non-governmental players throughout Puerto Rico's visitor economy and community at large, to empower economic growth. To discover all the beauty the Island has to offer, visit [DiscoverPuertoRico.com](http://DiscoverPuertoRico.com).