

Chamber Director Headache #1456

Maria Sandoval, Executive Director of the Ocotillo, Arizona, Chamber of Commerce, tossed two extra-strength pain relievers into her mouth and washed them down with the lukewarm remains of her second cup of coffee. This was a day she had been dreading. Today, six advertising agencies were making presentations to the Board of Directors of the Chamber of Commerce in attempts to receive the \$450,000 annual contract for promoting Ocotillo as a tourism destination.

The selection of which six agencies (out of the 45 that had submitted written proposals) had been a political nightmare. Most citizens, businesspeople, and government officials agreed that tourism was an economic engine for the local economy and that the Chamber of Commerce, in its role as development leader, had an obligation to coordinate tourism promotion. However, many locals, including the editor of the *Ocotillo Times*, believed the promotion contract should be granted to a local advertising agency. Maria had received dozens of calls from irate citizens when they learned that four of the six finalist firms were from outside the Ocotillo area.

Maria sympathized with these dissenters. If the agency selection goal was to generate additional jobs, revenue, and tax dollars within the community, it would be easy to understand why folks would feel that local companies should receive the marketing business. But still, if the primary goal was to bring an increasing number of tourists to the region, and get them to stay longer in the area, shouldn't the most capable firm receive the contract, no matter where that firm was located?

Maria sighed and gathered up the proposals from the six finalist advertising agencies, placing them in her briefcase. It was going to be a long day and a tough decision. But that's why they pay me the big bucks; she chuckled, as she hurried off to the meeting.



The tourist resort town, Varadero, Cuba welcomes the world. Photo by Ron Hilliard