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Area ad, marketing pros unite to dispel reputation

BY GREG A. LOHR
STAFF REPORTER

An action committee being formed by D.C.-area advertisers and marketers wants to create a regional buzz they hope will squelch the bad rap attached to their industry here.

Members want to throw their weight behind existing regional groups and events — doing free promotional work, for example — with the idea that good press for the area will mean good press and more clients for their sector.

The informal, unnamed committee is an extension of the online Ad-Marketing discussion list at netpreneur.org.

Mitch Arnowitz, who moderates the listserv, posted a quote in April that became the catalyst for the committee's formation. He pulled it from what's become an infamous Business 2.0 (www.business2.com) article that, in part, criticizes the D.C. area as lacking "many local services firms — public relations, interactive advertising or recruiting — that help generate and sustain buzz."

Arnowitz, director of business development for the netpreneur.org division of the nonprofit Morino Institute (www.morino.org), says his posting "generated, as you can imagine, a flurry of activity."

So far the action committee has lured about 20 people to each of its three meetings. The group is likely, Arnowitz says, to

be led by consensus.

"What you have is savvy marketers who are willing to step up and help out," he says. "The extent of their help hasn't been defined yet. But the groups, of course, would welcome this help. And it would, in turn, help ad-marketers."

Susan Trinter, president of D.C.-based consulting company Trinter International, attended the committee's first meeting. Although not in marketing, she has worked on high-tech and large infrastructure projects and, she says, "I know business marketing and profiling very well."

Some local marketers, Trinter says, feel slightly left out by the high-tech networking groups.

"A lot of them kept saying we have to not network with ourselves, but get visibility" outside the region, she says. "Of course, the best way to get recognized is to be part of the community."

The committee hasn't decided on any local efforts to support. But possible partners, Trinter says, include the Greater Washington Initiative, a unit of the Greater Washington Board of Trade. D.C.'s joint bid with Baltimore for the 2012 Olympics, she says, offers another opportunity for ad and marketing folks to band together and promote the area.

"I think at the end of the day, it really is important for them to unify the region and raise their visibility," she says. "They can't expect people to come to them."

■ E-MAIL: GLOHR@BIZJOURNALS.COM

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E-mail lists and discussion groups for advertisers and marketers:

■ **Ad-Marketing:** Moderated by a division of the nonprofit Morino Institute, at www.netpreneur.org.

■ **ClickZ Forum:** For sharing "the good, the bad and the ugly of the online marketing industry," at www.clickz.com/list/.

■ **Internet ads:** One is moderated by eyescream interactive, at www.internetadvertising.org. Another is at www.o-a.com.

■ **Internet sales:** Moderated by Multimedia Marketing Group, at www.mmgo.com/isales/.

Source: Netpreneur.org

Choice's \$40M marketing account goes up for review

BY KEITH T. REED
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Choice Hotels International is reconsidering its long-term advertising relationship — reportedly worth up to \$40 million a year — with Baltimore agency Gray Kirk/VanSant.

Gray Kirk has been the agency of record for Silver Spring-based Choice Hotel

company's new senior vice president of marketing. It is unclear whether Gray Kirk will even participate in the review. Gray says he is waiting for the results of an upcoming meeting between himself and Wielgus to decide whether Gray Kirk would submit a proposal.

"If we are asked to do what we're doing for them,"