



The 2010 Land Rover Range Rover at Steamboat Resort



The Ritz-Carlton Golf Club & Spa, Jupiter

The Ritz-Carlton Destination Club

Corporate Alliances, Complementary Products

Forget about “The Official Internet Provider of USA Swimming” – strategic alliances in the resort industry are all about synergistic fit.

By Matt McDaniel, editor



Andy Wirth, senior vice president of strategic alliances, Intrawest

While there are still a few companies that will align themselves with any other company willing to write a big check, many of today’s corporate alliances actually make sense. Two cases in point: Intrawest’s relationship with Land Rover and The Ritz-Carlton Destination Club’s relationship with Marquis Jet.

While the relationships that Intrawest and The Ritz-Carlton Destination Club have with their strategic allies are quite different in purpose and execution, they share an important element: value and relevance to their company.

Intrawest/Land Rover

In January, Intrawest and Land Rover North America announced a new strategic partnership that will see Land Rover serve as the year-round automotive partner at three of the premier mountain resorts in North America – Stratton Mountain in Vermont, and Winter Park Resort and Steamboat Ski & Resort Corporation, both in Colorado. Under the terms of the agreement, Land Rover vehicles will be on display at each resort and included in on-site and web-based promotions throughout the year. Online videos featuring Land Rover vehicles will feature winter driving tips for consumers and Land Rover will be the presenting sponsor of the Snow Report page on each resort’s website as well as

the email notifications that help resort guests plan their winter vacation experiences.

Intrawest is no stranger to strategic alliances. The company has agreements with American Express, Coca-Cola, Sprint and “a vast variety of major national and global brands,” says Andy Wirth, senior vice president of strategic alliances for Intrawest. He says that most of his company’s strategic alliances are built on three legs:

- **Advertising and brand exposure.** The realm of the advertising and promotions agencies, quality and volume of exposure offered by this component can compare very favorably to outdoor advertising or other promotional and advertising campaigns that a company might engage in. “Specifically, we provide exposure to a great number of customers over an extended period of time,” Wirth explains. “Relative to Land Rover, we’re doing that through the test-drive events and the daily snow and grooming reports and much, much more.”
- **Staff and client entertainment.** “Resorts are used as entertainment locales for our partners,” Wirth says. “Sprint will entertain its largest business customers here in Steamboat, while we



Exterior of a Marquis Jet Hawker 800XP



Intrawest's Steamboat Resort in Colorado

are staging major NBC broadcast events,” for example. He says that over time, his company will move forward similarly with Land Rover.

- **Direct return on investment.** Wirth says that where his company is able to, they provide either primary or exclusive access to their business as an account for the ally’s service or product. He again cites Sprint as an example, as Intrawest exclusively uses their telecommunications devices. “In that case, we pay our phone bill and it becomes a direct return on investment.” He says that while his company is unable to employ Land Rovers as vehicles for all staff, “ultimately this all distills down to helping Land Rover sell vehicles – and we’re quite confident we can do that.”

While the alignment of customer profiles is a given, what may be most interesting is the customers’ disposition while on vacation. “When people visit our resorts, their advertising filters are somewhat decreased,” Wirth says, adding that people tend to be significantly more receptive to and engaged by

whether it’s a car company, whether it’s a luxury goods company,” or other upscale organization, says Ed Kinney, vice president of corporate affairs for The Ritz-Carlton Destination Club, which oversees the private residence club. “We have to be very selective; obviously, there are people who are very willing to do business with us because they want the relationship or the connection with Ritz-Carlton ... we’re pretty guarded about making sure we’re not aligning ourselves with somebody that is trying to use us simply as an endorsement.”

The club’s partnership with Marquis Jet, which officially began in November 2009, is the farthest thing from being a mere endorsement. Kinney says the club’s alliance with Marquis Jet, a leader in private jet cards, is a relationship that not only aligns the two companies’ similarly upscale members, but also complements the two travel components offered.

Kinney says that the relationship with Marquis Jet made sense because club owners highly value their vacation time and don’t want to spend a lot of time

When people visit resorts, their advertising filters are somewhat decreased. They tend to be significantly more receptive to and engaged by contact with Land Rover than they would be at home.

contact with Land Rover than they would be at home. “The customer has significantly higher recall and the quality of impressions as measured through some of our focus groups ranks significantly higher,” he says.

The Ritz-Carlton Destination Club/ Marquis Jet

Like Intrawest, The Ritz-Carlton Destination Club seeks compatible companies to align with. “We look at relationships we think would be complementary

waiting in lines – instead, they want to maximize their time and “feel somewhat like they’re living a privileged lifestyle, so Marquis Jet just seemed to fit that,” Kinney adds.

But it takes more than that to become a partner with The Ritz-Carlton Destination Club. “They have a great customer-service track record too,” says Kinney. “Everything about their operation is first class – not only in just the total experience, but



obviously the equipment and everything that they offer. Kinney says The Ritz-Carlton Destination Club was confident that their members would appreciate and enjoy the Marquis Jet benefit, making his company very comfortable with the alliance. He notes that Marquis Jet “knows all the airports and their facilities” and can work almost seamlessly with the club to make the trip hassle-free and enjoyable. “It’s not like they’re hopping on an unfamiliar charter – Marquis Jet knows our side of the business, so we can work together and make

- Best-in-class status
- Stability

Kinney says Marquis Jet has all four components. “We’ve both been around for quite some time – Marquis Jet not so much as the Ritz-Carlton brand, but about the same amount of time as The Ritz-Carlton Destination Club – and we continue to show our customers that we each are the best of the best of our respective areas,” he notes. “That’s important as time

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sure everybody’s needs are taken care of,” Kinney says. “Complementing brands that reflect each other’s values of customer service and perception of prestige is critical for both of us.”

The Marquis Jet relationship also provides members with additional valuable benefits, including an executive response program that provides 24-hour access to medical services Mayo Clinic.

Of course, there are benefits to The Ritz-Carlton Destination Club as well. “Certainly there’s a collaborative marketing effort,” Kinney explains. “Marquis Jet members are great prospects for us and they’ve been included in the database to receive Ritz-Carlton Destination Club information. That is one of the mutually beneficial aspects of the partnership with Marquis Jet; our members are great candidates for their program and their members are great candidates to become members of Ritz-Carlton Destination Club.”

So what does the club look for in a potential strategic ally? Kinney says there are four primary elements:

- Complementary products/services
- Excellent customer service

goes by and you see other people in our industry going by the wayside and then other people on the jet card side going by the wayside as well, but each of us have maintained a stability and a solid reputation for being the best at what we do.”

And reputation is certainly important – perhaps even more important for this customer demographic. Kinney says club members look to his company and the expertise of their staff to evaluate and vet outside programs, and only present to members the ones that are the best fit. “There are many other fractional air programs out on the market today,” he says, “and the fact that we would go through the time and effort to evaluate them for what their merits are and use them as an extension of the membership benefits gives our members peace of mind.”

