



## Think Iowa City - Customer Success Story

### Customer Profile

With its unique set of influential writing institutions, and as the pioneer of teaching creative writing, Iowa City is one of the most literary cities on earth. In 2008, Iowa City joined Edinburgh, Scotland and Melbourne, Australia to become the third UNESCO City of Literature. And with an array of attractions and activities, the Iowa City area has something for everyone. The University of Iowa attracts football and wrestling fans by the thousands. Hiking, biking and kayaking encourages the explorers. And with craft breweries and farm-to-table restaurants, foodies think they've died and gone to heaven.

### Campaign Objectives

The Iowa City area is a bastion of literature, a sporting and outdoor mecca, and a hub of American culture. But the area doesn't always come to mind when people think of a vacation destination or weekend break spot. "It's a challenge," says Carrie Thomson, Media Director at Strategic America, Iowa City's innovative media agency. "Des Moines is only a couple hours away, Chicago and Kansas City are each four hours away, so there are a few metropolitan areas around and people are spoiled for choice. We need people to 'think' Iowa City."

To raise their profile and inspire inbound travel, Think Iowa City and Strategic America partnered with Sojern in July 2017 to run a multi-channel digital marketing campaign utilizing display, video, and native formats to ensure a full-funnel approach. The campaign measured hotel bookings and flight confirmations, as well as website visits to determine success.

### Sojern's Approach

Together, Sojern and Strategic America identified two audiences who would be ideal for Think Iowa City messaging. The first audience was residents of Iowa and a few nearby cities in Illinois, those in the "drive market," within a few hours proximity of Iowa City. This audience comprised cultural and literary enthusiasts, sports fans, or potential patients of University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics, a well-renowned medical facility visited by people from all over the US.

The second audience was out-of-state football fans who would visit to see their team play the University of Iowa Hawkeyes and then stay the weekend. "The University of Iowa is a Big 10 school," explains Thomson, "We wanted to focus on people coming from out of town for a game." Sojern targeted people in communities with teams coming to play the University of Iowa. These markets included Central Pennsylvania, Dallas, Chicago, Wyoming, Columbus, Minneapolis, and Indianapolis.

Utilizing predictive data science, billions of search and booking intent signals, and real-time analysis of anonymous traveler profiles, Sojern identified those people in-market for travel to or around the Iowa City area. Sojern also located football fans in those key markets, who would be most receptive to messaging from Think Iowa City. During the campaign, Sojern reached these in-market travelers with engaging display, video and native formats to ensure a full funnel approach. Video and native assets are effective at building brand awareness and inspiring those in the early phases of travel dreaming and planning. Sojern also influenced users through display, in order to keep the Iowa City area top of mind as they narrowed travel preferences and began booking.

The multi-channel approach paid off. During the three-month campaign, Sojern drove 1,297 total confirmed travelers and an estimated half million dollars in traveler spend to the Iowa City area. The 1,297 trips included 509 hotel bookings and 1,463 flight confirmations from outside the state, including 436 from those key football markets. In addition, the formats proved to be exactly what was required to make travelers more aware of the vast cultural, sporting and entertainment options Iowa City has to offer—inspiring over 19,000 visits to Think Iowa City targeted webpages. The native format, in particular, achieved a click-through rate (CTR) of 0.99%, nearly 10X higher than that of standard rich media.

And beyond the excellent campaign performance, the insights provided by the Sojern team will ensure that future campaigns are even more successful. “The insights from Sojern are great, and we can take these back to the client and challenge our own assumptions,” continues Thomson. “These insights will help us grow and be prepared for even greater success in the next campaign.”

## Results & Findings

- Drove 509 hotel bookings and 1,463 flight confirmations and an estimated half million dollars in traveler spend to the Iowa City area
- Built brand awareness with engaging video and native formats, the latter of which achieved a CTR of 0.99%
- Inspired 19,191 visits to Think Iowa City targeted webpages
- Ran a multi-channel digital marketing campaign to ensure a full-funnel approach.

## Creative Assets

### Native:



### Display:



## Carrie Thomson

### Media Director, Strategic America

“I’ve been really impressed with Sojern: the campaign has delivered strong results and the team has been friendly, responsive and knowledgeable throughout. One of the reasons we partnered with them is because marketing to travelers is their bread and butter. They’ve certainly delivered on their promise to drive more tourists to our beautiful destination and show them all the Iowa City area has to offer.”