

## Brac Reef business up

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The beach at the Brac Reef

While one of the two hotels on Cayman Brac has closed because of low numbers of tourists, the other has been actively pursuing ways to boost business, and this is paying off.

Trudy Viers, Manager of the Brac Reef Beach Resort (BRBR), said, "Business was always a struggle but we were seeing better numbers this year than the past few years."

One of the main strategies to increase business was to hire a public relations firm. The one they chose was Seasmoke PR, which is based in Canada.

Seasmoke handles the hotel's internet marketing and general PR work, and they are also hired by BRBR's sister company, the Little Cayman Beach Resort, to do their Internet marketing.

This is the second year they have been working for the BRBR, and among their achievements is to improve the hotel's ranking on Google.

"They're masters at it, and that's what we pay them for," said Ms Viers. "They've been worth the money. More and more people say they are finding us on the Internet. All of these things help."

Seasmoke PR also has customers in places similar to the Brac, such as Belize, and very different, like Canada. They send out news releases and persuade writers to come down to the Brac.

In addition, their staff makes calls to all the dive shops in the US on their behalf and sends mass emails. As well as the diving, they promote other attractions, like rock climbing and birding.

"They just sell us as a whole - make people aware of who we are and what we have to offer. It really helped. I think there are a number of things why our numbers are up but this is one of the most positive," said Ms Viers.

The BRBR have also used local promotions to tap into the domestic market, and these worked well, according to Ms Viers.

"We've had so many people staying here who have lived in Grand Cayman for years or even all their lives, but who had never been to the Brac," she said.

"This is a great getaway and much cheaper than flying to the US. We have had a mix of expatriates and Caymanians, who appear to enjoy the resort and its facilities equally, especially the spa services."

Promotions are done mostly through Cayman Net News, which they have found is better for their needs than radio advertising.

"People like to get away from Cayman and it helps everybody here. We only do a one-meal package, so they rent a car and travel around the Island."

While business is up, Ms Viers admits that the Brac is not an easy place to do business. A major drawback is the cost of airfare. People can go to Bonaire, Aruba or Cozumel for a lot cheaper.

Their greatest concern now is that jet flights will be reduced, following the closure of Divi Tiara Beach Resort this month.

"It's better for the Island to have at least two hotels that can work together," she said. "We are watching the numbers and are ready to capture as much overflow from Divi as possible. It will be good business for us in the short term, but not in the long term."

She added, "There is a danger for the whole island if the Divi is not taken over. We can absorb two or three of the staff from Divi, but at the end of the day, we are still only a forty room hotel."