

Using the Internet to Plan Family Reunions/Vacations

If you come from a medium to large size family like me, then you can appreciate the energy, time, and patience (lots of it) involved in planning a family vacation! Of course the end result makes it worth the crisis and production up front, but needless to say planning family reunions/vacations has never been easy.

According to a recent internet poll, 90+% of family planning functions result in tension, competition, brawls, major conflict and or hostility. Over 50% result in one or more family members cutting contact and/or communication with other family members. Further, over 40% cut off communication for a period of over 6 months, and only 18% for a period of less than 3 months. The bottom line is that if you come from a family like mine, then you can value, appreciate and probably even contribute to the data compiled from these polls.

There are many ways to plan family reunions and vacations. The most common way is via phone. A less common way may be via e-mail for the specific purpose of saving money and cellular phone minutes on those relatives that aren't local. Other options include travel agencies or using family travel websites to retrieve information about good family vacations. I have to admit that I was surprised to find out quite a few families used travel agencies. I guess that would make sense though. Why not pawn the work on a complete stranger? Let them deal with Aunt Maggie's wining about being a vegetarian, or Uncle Jerry's request for a sports channel in the hotel room. The less we have to listen to, the better!

I have to admit that what surprised me more than any of the options above was coming across a few families that used technology to plan their extended family vacations. Technology? Technology is defined as "electronic or digital products and systems considered as a group." If you have access to a computer and know how to log into a website, then this type of "technology" can take all the "emotional drama" out of planning a vacation. This particular family was utilizing a concept that I had not used before. Communication, sharing of information across the globe (literally) was being accomplished via a family website.

The private and secure website allowed family members to login and collaborate using a variety of tools. The family forum is a message board that allows everyone to share their thoughts and idea relative to the upcoming family event. Once you have decided on a date, use the family events calendar to post the big family event. Family members can create polls and vote on reunion games, food and locations. You can even chat with your family members in real-time!

The family website also comes with an address book that comes in handy while sending out family reunion invitations and announcements. Share photos of possible locations and of course share photos with the family after the event.

If you are willing to invest in the slight fee that these website services require, you, the average consumer can gain immense value in planning a family vacation. In summary, here are some of the pros and cons of utilizing this site.

Pros:

- + Less costly form of communication
- + Can communicate any time of day; no restrictions
- + Post plans, options for vacations, create polls for others to vote on
- + Post costs of various cruise packages, locations, options
- + Post pictures; create chat rooms; post deadlines on calendars
- + Take the drama out of dealing with Aunt Maggie & Uncle Jerry!
- + Website can be used for so much more than planning vacations and can be used long after the big event.

Cons:

- + Lack of live voice contact (such as that expressed on phone)
- + Slight fee associated with service
- + "Elderly generation" must be technology savvy

Good luck planning your next family vacation/reunion.

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About the Author

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