



Office of
the Prime Minister

Final Remarks at Global Sales Summit Sandals Emerald Bay

Hon. Philip E. Davis, KC, MP
Prime Minister
The Commonwealth of The Bahamas

January 6, 2023

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good morning.

What a pleasure it is to address such accomplished professionals, who shine in the realm of Sales, and who contribute so much to our nation's economy. I trust that after a year of toiling, you now have a chance to enjoy the fruits of your labour as you relax at this amazing property.

Life is a continuous cycle. As you wind down from 2022, you are also gearing up for 2023. This will mean ramping up your energy. It will mean methodically setting strategies to make a difference over the next 12 months. Your stay here at Sandals Emerald Bay will surely assist in helping you refocus and re-centre. So, my task is simply to share some observations that will, hopefully, serve as a reminder of the mission you pursue every day on behalf of Sandals.

I will do this under three broad categories, which are:

- Competitiveness of the Tourism Industry
- Customer Service and
- Commitment to regional tourism integration

First, let's consider Competitiveness in the Tourism Industry.

There was a time when tourism-focused enterprises competed within their own region for business. These days technology has made the world much smaller and there is virtually no destination out of the reach of the average traveller. Put simply, the world is everyone's oyster.

This means that every tourism enterprise, anywhere in the world, to some extent, is the competition. The traveller is not grading on a curve. Instead, the traveller expects excellence in a vacation experience, everywhere he or she goes. There is simply no option but to deliver on those expectations.

There was a time, for example, when only heat, sand, and more sand were found in the desert. Now, travellers crave the experiences that are offered in some deserts. In fact, deserts are places that people go today for opulence, culture, and even traditional winter diversions because someone dared to do the impossible there. Above all, those experiences come with top-tier hospitality.

So, the rest of us in the tourism industry know that we must be world-class in all that we do. Certainly, the Sandals organization knows this, and delivers. You know what it means to win multiple World Travel Awards. World's Leading All-Inclusive Company, World's Leading All-Inclusive Resort, World's Leading All-Inclusive Family Resort Brand, and World's Leading Caribbean Attraction Company are all part of your resumé. So, it is clear that Sandals is world-class.

My simple message on that point is: Do not be comfortable.

Although we all strive to succeed, to some degree, success can also be the enemy because it can lull us into apathy. Those on the top must never be fully satisfied with past accomplishments. There must always be an appetite for constant improvement. The desire to be better will fuel your competitive edge, allowing you to remain at the top.

Sandals Resorts are steeped in competitive advantages. Each property sits on the doorstep of the world's largest economy, the United States of the America, with a GDP of more than \$20 trillion. The Sandals properties are situated in the most popular tourist region of the world, featuring the most spectacular beaches on Earth, people who are gifted in the arts and entertainment, and diverse and exciting cultures.

It is a salesperson's dream. In fact, value like that pretty much sells itself in the hands of a motivated salesperson who knows how to close the deal. So, I urge you to hold on to that competitive fire, present Sandals Resorts' competitive advantages clearly to your clients, and continue to deliver business to Sandals in record numbers.

The Ministry of Tourism advises me that forward bookings for The Bahamas are very impressive. It is projected that the numbers of arrivals for our country for the first six months of 2023 will exceed those of 2019, our last pre-pandemic year. The Sales team of Sandals Resort certainly has played a role in this. So, we thank you and we encourage you to keep the competitive fire burning, and keep up the good work.

Closely related to competitiveness is customer service.

Steve Jobs once pointed out that the best customer service is giving the customers what they want even before the customers know what they want. To illustrate the point, he quoted Henry Ford, who once said: "If I had asked customers what they wanted, they would have told me, 'A faster horse.'"

Henry Ford's insight enabled vehicles to be owned by the average person. Today, we all have them, but it was his assembly line that brought it to us before we even knew we wanted it. This is the type of vision that is needed to elevate customer service.

Sandals must constantly ask if the customer's needs are being properly evaluated and anticipated. Are details being put in place before the customer requests them? Many times, they will be little things like ensuring that a cup of coffee is refilled at breakfast, before the customer asks for it. But the little things build to large-scale satisfaction.

There are innovations to be discovered and implemented at Sandals properties. And I am certain that those innovations will lead to greater customer satisfaction.

In addition, we must always remember that the greatest resource of an organization is its people. We say this all the time of The Bahamas and our people. But it is not just a saying, it is the truth. Our people remain our most treasured resource, and our people are the element that makes the greatest difference in customer service. The human touch, ladies and gentlemen, is invaluable.

You must ensure that you remain not only knowledgeable but empathic as you interact with guests and prospective guests. You must know the Sandals product, inside and out. Same is true of staff members who come into contact with guests during their stay. They must be prepared at all times to offer the best possible advice to those guests.

All this must be done with sincerity, and with a type of empathy that transcends a transactional interaction. It must be more than a job to staff members. If helping guests is seen as a high vocation, Sandals would tap into a perpetual source of sustainable business.

If you, as members of the Sales team, are able to promise this human touch, this level of attention to guests, Sandals will surely remain a top draw for this region.

Finally, we can have a look at regional tourism integration around airlift and multi-destination travel.

The Bahamas itself can be considered a region. With 16 major islands, and a total of 700 islands that are spread across more than 100,000 square miles, multi-destination travel is something we have always encouraged. However, moving from island to island in a cost-effective way has always been a challenge.

As a Caribbean region, we must look seriously at how airlift can be used in a much more significant way to connect our nations. This will ensure that our citizens have access to the entire region, and that our visitors are able to easily enjoy multiple destinations.

It will be my honour this year to assume the chairmanship of the Conference of the Caribbean Community. The term begins this month and ends in June. Although, it is a relatively short time, we must use the time wisely. During my chairmanship, I especially hope to focus on tourism issues. The issue of air interconnectivity will certainly be discussed.

Fortunately, the 44th Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Caricom Conference will be held in Nassau this February. This gives us an early opportunity to concentrate on these matters and to begin to forge a plan to make it easier for your guests to enjoy multiple Sandals vacations within the region.

Within the Bahamas, the option to enjoy Sandals at Emerald Bay and Sandals Royal Bahamian during the same visit is very viable. With daily air service between Nassau and Exuma, and with a reliable water ferry service already in place, Sandals within the Bahamas is able to package such an offer with relative ease.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Your Sandals achievements and potential greatly encourages me. After reflecting on all that Sandals has done as well as all I believe is still to come, I am again inspired to push even harder for strides in our tourism industry.

After your stay at this beautiful property, I trust that you will similarly be inspired and mentally-prepared for the year ahead. Making advancements is never easy, but the fight is well-worth the reward. Throughout the year, please remember that you are not in the battle alone. The Government of The Bahamas, especially in the form of the Ministry of Tourism, Investments & Aviation, is here, shoulder to shoulder with you. We stand with you to accomplish even more for our tourism industry through improved competitiveness, customer service, and a commitment to regional integration.

Meanwhile, enjoy the incredible beauty of the Exumas, and when you return to your sales duties, we look forward to seeing you reach even greater success this year than you achieved last year.

Thank you.