

## **ELITE ISLAND RESORTS' STOCK SWAP CREATES MEDIA FRENZY: CNBC, THE NEW YORK TIMES, CNN, GMA & More**

The stock market collapsed triggering a major financial crisis and investor panic, with portfolios rapidly shrinking. A major economic meltdown ensued. Elite Island Resorts needed an attention grabbing idea that would quickly create a buzz for its little known brand and dramatically impact sales or risk a winter season that might not sustain its resorts. A new concept and PR idea, Stock Swap, was invented that would give investors the opportunity to recoup their Stock Market losses by swapping their depressed S&P stocks for previous high values to "pay" for a \$5,000 vacation. We created an innovative idea and tied into the biggest news story (Wall Street market collapse) to create a rapid explosion of awareness and sales and 450+ news stories!

Create attention for a brand that was not a household name - Elite Island Resorts, a private hotel group, that never sought major national PR coverage previously because each resort is branded individually. We had to impact reservations/ sales to prevent occupancies from declining below 75 percent. We created awareness for an innovative/creative program that would "make the phones ring" immediately. Our first media goal was to announce the program with an exclusive on CNBC and a major national newspaper's business section to create excitement and traction for Elite's Stock Swap, in order to reach Elite Island Resort's key target audience and create a rapid response in the marketplace. We leverage this business story to other news media in order to garner additional attention and awareness for the program and impact sales for Elite. We also wanted to create awareness and respect in the business world for Elite Island Resorts.

This campaign's placements were created through inspiration and tenacious ingenuity. Realizing there is "no box" when it comes to creativity, we worked closely with Elite to formulate this program. Our market research was our gut that we had a groundbreaking idea and the understanding that investors longed to recoup their losses and the media would grab hold of this story if positioned and timed correctly.

We convinced one of the most credible financial news broadcasters, CNBC, to break this as a news story at the end of an extremely volatile trading week. We simultaneously pitched The New York Times aiming to set the tone that Stock Swap was credible to investors and to other media. We pitched the travel section editor for a print exclusive in the business section. The challenge was allowing the story to break on CNBC on a Friday at 5pm as an exclusive and obtaining a print exclusive, while not being able to release the details of the story to the Times until the broadcast. We were able to convince The New York Times editor to hold space based on trust as we teased the story. Then hours before the news broke on CNBC, we stayed in touch with the Times to ensure the space was held and feverishly pitched them with minutes to spare on Friday evening to secure a front-page

business story the next day. We then leveraged this story to AP and the local Florida affiliates where Elite was based to provide further traction for the story. The story spurred media frenzy with outlets clamoring for the Stock Swap news and b-roll.

No travel company had ever offered to accept depressed U.S. stock as "payment" for vacations. The key message: hard hit investors deserve and can afford a vacation. Investors could transfer depressed U.S. Stock, for which Elite Island Resorts would revalue to the previous highs of July 2008, and provide them with a \$5,000 vacation with "found money." Everyone who wished they had had a crystal ball and sold their stock before Wall Street collapsed now had a unique opportunity to recoup their Stock Market losses by trading their stock for an amazing vacation. This program offered the perfect way to communicate and create awareness for Elite and its luxury resorts for couples and families.

We achieved all goals! The story broke as hard news on CNBC's Closing Bell, followed the next day by a front-page business feature in The New York Times, which ignited into an avalanche of news coverage and media buzz for Elite and its Stock Swap. Next AP covered the story, followed by another live interview secured on West Palm Beach's local ABC affiliate near Elite's headquarters. From there the story was covered and syndicated across the country! GMA, TODAY, NBC, CNN, FOX, MSNBC, CBS and their affiliates jumped on and covered the story! Reuters, AOL, About.com, Yahoo, Concierge.com, Forbes.com, and hundreds of newspapers, web outlets and travel trade publications covered this story! This achieved tremendous awareness and economic results.

Stock Swap sparked 450+ news stories, 100+ million impressions within two weeks and took on a life its own, which kept the story in the news for four additional months when TIME highlighted Stock Swap again – the program continued to have momentum with the media and consumers!

Elite received a tidal wave of inquiries and immediate reservations by investors. Stock Swap outperformed expectations for a little known Caribbean resort group. With no budget, we were able to successfully obtain several million dollars of business! (Elite is a private company; exact figures cannot be released.)

We exceeded our goals the tremendous coverage that occurred for a privately held resort group. Former GE CEO Jack Welch saw the coverage and endorsed Stock Swap as the best idea of 2008, and the innovation needed to turnaround the economy! The goal was to stimulate interest in Elite and generate business...this successful program had dramatic and immediate results that help the resort group in a dire economy. Reservations generated went beyond anyone's wildest dreams; the communications program took on a life of its own - with the media clamoring for the news story we created!