

MSOD 616 Paper - Developing the Eye of a Strategist

Part 1: Environmental Scan

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Watering Hole is a three-year old startup company which produces conferences and festivals within North America. These events are designed to promote discovery, learning, and networking with creatives and talented supporters of indie business, ethical goods, and the handmade economy. Our market consists of “geeks”, “freaks”, and “weirdos”, who don’t believe that any of those terms are dirty words. In fiscal year 2017, Watering Hole produced three successful events: (1) the third annual “Grass Roots Vibrations Shindig”, a 5-day music and healthcare conference in Beeville, Texas, which celebrates the music of Willie Nelson and the latest research in herbal medicine and exploration; (2) the second annual 7-day International Arts Festival in Houston (with the festival theme focusing this year on Kazakhstan); and, (3) the third annual “That was Zen, This is Toa” creativity and mindfulness conference in Banff, Alberta, Canada, which is a 4-day gathering of artists, philosophers, and poets from around the world.

Watering Hole is interested in expanding its conference portfolio by assessing the feasibility of producing a 5-day innovation and culinary event in Lyon, France. The event (code named “À La Carte”) will serve as a space for young creatives from around the world to network and share ideas with innovators in the Lyon metropolitan area. The region, itself, along with the city of Lyon, will play a prominent role as the fertile terroir for the incubation and development of new ideas and connections.

There are many reasons why Watering Hole is looking at France and Lyon in particular. France is one of the world’s leading economic powers. It is made up of productive, skilled workers, and has a reputation for quality products and services (IRC). Lyon describes itself as a very favorable environment for entrepreneurs and startups. Over half of the population is

between 25-49 years of age. It is the most business-friendly city in France and in the top 20 most attractive cities in the world for international investment (Aderly). Lyon's business promotion is assertive and clear in stating its desire to attract foreign investment. Aderly offers a Lyon Start Box, a specially-designed package to help kick-start one's business rapidly and test Lyon's market. Watering Hole has requested a Start Box to learn more about conducting business in Lyon.

How difficult would it be to live and work in Lyon? On the plus side, France has an abundant cultural life, where wine and food are elevated to the status comparable to the arts. On the down side there is paperwork and bureaucratic hurdles through which one must navigate: a visa for stays longer than 30 days; a work permit (and, perhaps, a EU Blue Card); a residence permit (either a "carte de séjour" good for one year and renewable for six months or a "carte de resident" good for up to ten years); a French checking account at a local bank with a debit card (carte bleue), a line of credit, and a checkbook; and, medical insurance through the French national health system (eligible to all legal residents of France, including resident foreigners and their families). Lyon is divided into nine arrondissements. Because the city is quite large, a car may be necessary, though getting around by foot is said to be easy in either of the two business districts: La Part-Dieu and Cordeliers. The city also has an integrated public transportation system of buses, subways, and trains.

Is Lyon as open, accessible, and business-friendly as Aderly describes? Just how easy can a foreign investor and entrepreneur set up shop over there? Will the environment be hospitable and supportive for a US-based company wishing to enter the Lyon market? These are questions to be tested during our visit next month.

References

www.aderly.com

International Relocation Center. IRC – Destinations Online. Living Abroad, LLC.

https://internationalrelocationcenter.com/front_end/pages/destinations/print_report.php