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BA punishes agents for using GDS

TARYN NIGHTINGALE AND CANDICE MAY

BRITISH Airways and Iberia have followed Lufthansa's lead and will charge travel agents a surcharge on bookings made through the GDS.

From November 1, the airlines will apply a charge of GBP£8 (R134) per fare component to any bookings which are not made using an NDC-based connection, or through other "low-cost channels", such as their websites, airline sales offices and call-centres.

Lufthansa, which was the first airline to introduce a fee on GDS bookings in September 2015, charges €16 (R233) for every ticket issued (see *TNW* June 17, 2015).

A final decision on BA-marketed fares flown wholly on Comair is still pending and will be communicated in due course.

BA and Iberia told *TNW* that the decision to charge the fee is a result of the airlines "changing their business model as travel distribution has changed rapidly in recent years," the airlines also said the charge recovers the

expenses incurred through "higher cost channels".

According to the spokesperson, the charges won't be incurred on:

- direct NDC connection platforms,
- aggregators or self-booking tools connected via NDC,
- other travel intermediaries, (including GDSs) that adopt NDC-based connections
- and an IAG booking portal for travel agencies and corporations, which is due to be ready shortly.

Although SA travel agents agree it's unfortunate the charge will fall on the

consumer, their Lufthansa experience has proven it's better to roll with the punches. **Mary Shilletto**, ceo of Thompsons Travel, expects other airlines to follow suit and says "provided you give the client consistent service and good product, the client will accept the charge".

Marco Ciocchetti, ceo of XL Travel, agrees and says "The initial reaction will be disappointment in the airlines but people in the travel industry are a tough, industrious bunch so I don't foresee this affecting business to any great degree."

Ceo of Asata, **Otto de Vries**, says the charge is another hidden cost passed on to the consumer and makes fare transparency and comparison shopping more difficult. "In fact, there is no comparison shopping possible when the consumer goes on the BA website," he says.

Amadeus issued a statement saying that it strongly believes indirect distribution remains the most cost-efficient solution for all parties. "Within the context of NDC, our vision is to develop an integrated solution that can be widely adopted by

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Rennies launches cutting-edge site

TARYN NIGHTINGALE

RENNIES has taken a leap out to the forefront of the online travel business with the launch of its new website, Renniestravel.com.

The site can be used by your average-Joe who books online, corporate clients who have access to discounted pricing, and existing and new entrants in the industry that'd like to be affiliated with the Rennies brand.

One of the main goals of Renniestravel.com was to achieve rate parity, says **Bronwyn Philipps**, md of

HRG Rennies Travel. By using aggregators, consolidators and direct integrations, (such as APIs) Renniestravel.com groups all the content available to consumers plus some extra (including access to inventory like Lots of Hotels and the content available on two GDSs) in one space. "Instead of trying to compete with a Booking.com, we did an API so that its content would appear as part of your inventory on Renniestravel.com," says Bronwyn.

This site, which officially launched February 1, gives the

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Book a cruise – win a cruise!

It may be Cruises International's 25th birthday, but they are spoiling consultants. Agents who book any cruise between June 1 and July 31 on one of the nine brands Cruises International represents could win a seven-night Mediterranean cruise aboard the newest *Symphony of the Seas* for themselves and a partner. The prize includes flights, transfers, port taxes and gratuities. Pictured (from left) are Cruises International reservations consultants, **Vicky Ntaka** and **Lookout Ngwenya**. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

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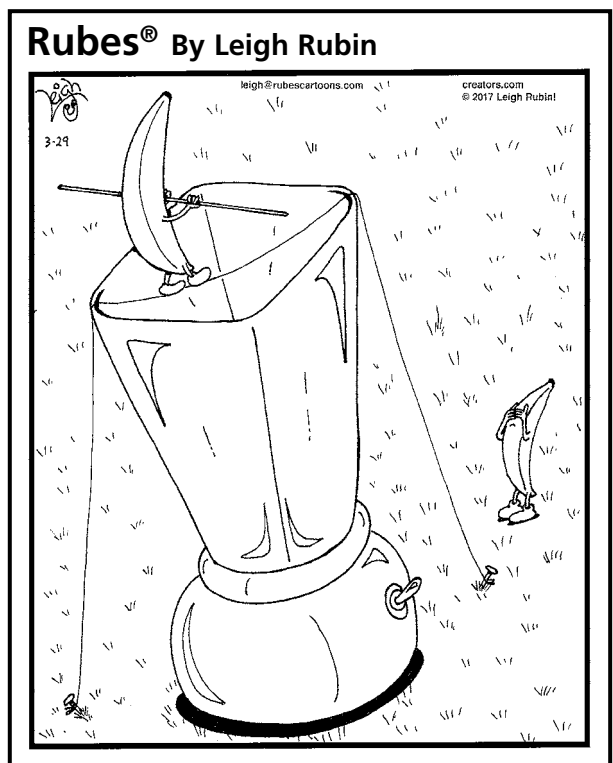
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Flyafrica to fly again

CANDICE MAY

LOW-COST carrier, flyafrica Zimbabwe, will relaunch operations within the next two weeks.

While launch dates have not yet been set, the airline says it will first start daily return flights from Harare to Bulawayo to Victoria Falls.

The airline also plans to launch daily return flights from HRE to JNB and thrice-weekly return flights from

Bulawayo to Johannesburg once its Foreign Operators Permit is renewed in mid-July. Thereafter, the airline plans to increase its HRE-JNB flights to a double-daily service. Flights to Gaborone and Lusaka are also in the pipeline.

Cassidy Mugwagwa, chairperson of flyafrica Zim, says his company has invested R85m (\$6.6m) into the airline's operations in anticipation of the relaunch. The airline has acquired

two B737-700s which are currently undergoing pre-delivery maintenance checks. The airline has also established offices at Harare International Airport, he says.

In December, flyafrica Zim announced plans to partner with a SA carrier on its HRE-JNB route (see TNW December 14, 2016). Cassidy said details on this partnership and the airline's new ceo would be announced after the relaunch. ■

Department clarifies birth certificate confusion

CANDICE MAY

TNW spoke to the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) to confirm which type of birth certificate is required for international travel by a minor following posts on Open Jaw by agents requesting clarity on the matter.

Agents were confused by whether an unabridged birth certificate or birth certificate was required. This after the DHA stopped issuing separate documents for abridged and unabridged birth

certificates and replaced it with a full birth certificate – a single document that details a child's maternal and paternal birth details – on November 1, 2016.

David Hlabane, DHA spokesperson, says children born from November 1, 2016 have automatically been issued full birth certificates that are valid for international travel. However, children born before this date still need to obtain unabridged birth certificates.

The confusion could stem

from the fact that birth certificates issued from November 1, 2016 are now referred to as "Birth Certificates," as opposed to "Unabridged Birth Certificates".

David says since these changes came into effect, so have two others: the validity of a parental consent affidavit has been extended to six months and school principals must now issue letters confirming permission for children travelling on school tours. ■

BA punishes agents for using GDS

From page 1

travel agencies and airlines to deliver sustainable results," the statement reads.

Gm of Travelport South Africa, **Robyn Christie**, says travellers will be penalized both through this surcharge and the potential introduction of less efficient working practices.

"We remain engaged with BA and Iberia to work on mechanisms to connect with

travel agencies and travellers, including the integration into our system of their content through their API," she says.

A spokesperson for Sabre said the surcharge imposes costs and inconvenience for those using the GDS channel. "Sabre will continue to seek an agreement that delivers value and meets the revenue needs of the IAG airlines; and the choice, transparency and convenience demanded

by travel agencies and consumers."

Iata said it could not comment on the business models of airlines, but did say "the NDC is a technical standard, not a business model. In fact, the NDC standard is business-model agnostic; it can 'plug-in' to any distribution strategy, whether it involves the use of a content aggregator (the role played by GDSs) or not". ■

Rennies launches cutting-edge site

From page 1

discerning traveller who prefers to shop online access to cheap deals, luxury products, and everything else that has to do with travel, says Bronwyn. Users have access to information on security risks and visas, and can also purchase an international sim card for example, she says.

The site also enables the use of affiliate codes, where closed user groups with a specific code, have access to all the content on the site at discounted rates.

On the one hand, giving access to closed user groups

is about cultivating client loyalty: Any employee of a corporate, from the md to the cleaner, can book using an affiliate code, says Bronwyn.

On the other hand, Rennies can provide a solution for agents who want to be associated with the Rennies brand. The site functions as the front-end where travel is booked, which can also be linked to a mid-office solution. "Agents can thus run their business in totality, having the functionality to make changes, create quotes, and do their admin," says **Lanice Newton**, brand manager of Rennies

Specialist Brands. Solutions can also be provided for people who want to sell travel by just using the site, affiliate codes, and the support of the Rennies' travel consultants.

A white-label version – where the site's url, content and branding is tailored to suit the client – is also available.

Furthermore, Rennies is also offering an API of the air, hotel, and car-rental content and pricing available on Renniestravel.com. The user can pull this content through to any sales platform they wish.

See TNW's ITC feature on page 11. ■

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Cheaper FA fares on GDS

CANDICE MAY

FLYSAFAIR is now offering cheaper ticket prices on Amadeus and Travelport after refiling all its fares in order to offer a more competitive solution to the trade.

“So far, we have received great feedback on the fares we have created.”

New fares start from R1 368 including all taxes, a R60 distribution fee, 23kg of checked luggage, two penalty-free flight changes and complimentary priority boarding. **Kirby Gordon**, head of sales and distribution of FlySafair, says the R60 distribution fee is not a fuel surcharge (YQ tax), but is used to cover the airline’s costs of transacting on the GDS.

Kirby explains that FlySafair initially

filed more conservative fares to recover the high costs of distributing its inventory on the GDS. But since launching on the GDS under the H1 code in November last year and then attaining its own carrier code, FA, in March, the airline realised that it had overestimated its distribution costs and thus saw an opportunity to introduce lower fares.

According to Kirby, FlySafair expects the more competitively priced fares to help drive volume and sales. “So far, we have received great feedback on the fares we have created.” Kirby says agents are specifically citing the benefit of the two penalty-free changes that are still offered despite the reduced fares. “Our aim is to continue to work with the trade to optimise the offering we make available through the GDS,” he adds. ■

Cruise sales continue to swell

CANDICE MAY

SALES for affordable contemporary cruise brands, Royal Caribbean and Celebrity Cruises, have increased by 35% compared with the same period last year.

Thaybz Khan, brand manager of Cruises International, says this strong booking trend is expected to flow into 2018. She believes the increase in sales is due to travel agents recognising the high earning potential on cruises and thus being more open to learning how to sell the product more effectively. The growing number of agents signing up to Cruises International’s training programmes and Shipmates, an edutainment platform, confirms this, says Thaybz. “Agents also enjoy a high volume of repeat business, which makes the return on investment worthwhile.”

Similarly, consumers are recognising the value of a cruise holiday. “A cruise is like staying at a floating resort that allows you to

see more than one destination,” she says, adding that all-inclusive prices, which include top-notch shows and on-board activities, make cruise holidays all the more appealing to corporate and leisure travellers alike.

Cruise agents agree that there has been an influx of bookings for 2017 and 2018.

Raymond Leibman, owner of Just Cruising, who was one of Cruises International’s top cruise agents for 2016, says the leisure market is the most “vibrant” it has been in a long time. **Dalene Oroni**, groups operational manager of Development Promotions, has seen a daily increase in enquiries for cruising in the MICE industry not only for 2016 and 2017, but up until 2020. “I firmly believe South Africans are getting more used to the idea of cruising and the fantastic holiday it can be for everyone. There truly is a cruise line out there for every taste,” she says. ■

Air Mauritius to debut A350 on JNB route in November

AIR MAURITIUS is set to debut the first of its six new A350-900s on major routes, including Mauritius to Johannesburg, later this year.

The first A350-900, which is still

under construction, will land in Johannesburg for the first time on November 18.

Wouter Nel, sales and marketing manager of Air Mauritius Southern

Africa, says the A350 will mainly fly on the Mauritius – Paris route, but will also serve the Mauritius – London and Mauritius – Johannesburg routes.

Of the six new A350-900 aircraft, four

will be purchased directly from Airbus and two will be leased from AerCap.

The aircraft will have a two-class configuration, with 28 business-class seats and 298 economy-class seats. ■

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Tips from Louis the Lawyer – What about the CGSO?

In this series, advocate Louis Nel evaluates aspects of the Consumer Goods and Services Ombudsman (CGSO). This week, Louis discusses the participant's responsibility as a member of the CGSO.

The CGSO was established in early 2015 in terms of section 82 of the Consumer Protection Act (CPA) 2008 (Act No. 68 of 2008).

It's mandatory for all participants (any entities operating within the industry) to do the following:

- Comply with provisions of the CGSO Code of Conduct ('the Code')
- Register with the CGSO as per the procedures provided on the CGSO website
- Contribute towards the funding of the CGSO
- Establish an internal complaints-handling process
- Monitor complaints
- Display the CGSO's decal on the travel agent/supplier's trading premises and a prescribed notice on its website stating that the travel agency/supplier is a participant to the Code and bound to it
- Ensure that an internal complaints-handling procedure and a copy of the Code and/or summary thereof is available to any consumer upon request
- Ensure staff and agents have adequate knowledge of the CPA, any regulations issued, the Code and internal complaints-handling procedure. This means that training

on the CGSO and CPA is crucial and must be ongoing

- Keep records* of the complaints received for three years. These records must state whether the Consumer was referred to the CGSO for assistance in resolving the complaint. The records must also include details of the complaint, such as the nature, time involved, whether it was resolved and if so, the remedy used to resolve it
- Such data* must to be used to highlight recurring complaints, be shared with management, staff and industry
- Behaviour to resolve complaints and disputes must be in accordance with the law, the spirit and provisions of this Code and the CPA. The reference to 'the spirit' is important: For example, agents must not exclude liability for gross negligence in their T&C and/or indemnity and hope no-one will notice.

The CGSO will keep participants up to date and educated on the Code by distributing information brochures, guidelines and guidance regarding compliance via workshops and its website. ■

To the point



EUROPCAR Group and Lufthansa have expanded their partnership to include Europcar car-rental products. Lufthansa is now providing a full experience to its customers across 130 countries, using Europcar's extensive knowledge and wide range of mobility solutions. Europcar Group has been a partner of Lufthansa's loyalty programme, Miles & More, for 15 years.



All about Abu Dhabi

The Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority visited Johannesburg agents as part of its Abu Dhabi Roadshow on May 23 at Summer Place in Hyde Park. MC, Barry Hilton, had the agents in stitches the entire morning. Pictured (from left) are, Johnathan Hollard, SA trade and MICE executive of TCA Abu Dhabi, Hamad Al Hosani, promotions executive of TCA Abu Dhabi, His Excellency Mr Mahash Saeed Salem Alhameli, ambassador of UAE to South Africa and Jean Martins, SA Country Manager of TCA Abu Dhabi. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Thailand marine parks to temporarily close

THAILAND will close dozens of national marine parks over the wet season – which runs from June until October – to allow them to recover from the ravages of high-season mass tourism.

According to Nathaphon Ratanaphan, chief of Marine National Parks, 61 of the country's 154 national park zones will close. These include popular destinations such as the Koh Phi Phi islands, Similan Islands, Koh Ha islets

near Koh Lanta and the Jao Mai beach national marine park.

Thailand has not yet announced the exact dates during which the park zones will be closed.

Nathaphon says the closures are necessary to allow nature to recover at its own pace and to better protect the area during the monsoon season. During the closures, environmental impact studies will also be carried out. ■

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Sha'p Sha'p!

Local is lekker! City Lodge Hotels has 54 hotels across all SA provinces. Here is the latest news in domestic tourism.

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New shuttle service launches in Cape Town

Cape Comoot, a new shuttle business, will begin operations in the Western Cape. Bookings opened on May 4, however the service will only start running from June 1.

The shuttle will run from Greenmarket Square in Cape Town to Cape Point and Franschhoek. Services will eventually be expanded to

Stellenbosch and Hermanus. Each shuttle will offer air conditioning, free WiFi and mobile phone charging stations.

Cape Comoot was co-founded by **Martin Bo Nielsen** and **Yolandie Le Grange**. "Cape Town has become a mainstream destination with tourists expecting the same service,

facilities and convenience found at destinations such as London, Tokyo or Paris," says Martin.

Yolandie adds that it's important that guests to the city are able to pay for transport at a price closer to what they would if they were to use public transport in any other global destination.

Midlands property unveils first phase of refurbishment

Midlands Saddle & Trout in Mooi River is undergoing a R16,7m refurbishment by the First Group.

Work will be done on 59 chalets and to the general upliftment of the property, aimed at revitalising the resort.

"The property has been the darling of the Midlands for many years and this refurbishment investment is our commitment to ensuring

that the Resort remains unique and appealing," said **Tim Spencer**, hotel director of the First Group.

The two-year project started last year with the first phase unveiled at the end of 2016 and the final phase scheduled for completion by the end of this year.

The chalets, which offer 360-degree views of the mountains and dairy farms, have received new rugs,

re-upholstered furniture, new curtains and original acrylic artworks and the fireplace now has new black polished granite tiles. The refurbishment also includes 10 kilometres of new paddock fencing, an animal farm and a newly renovated restaurant.

The work forms part of the First Group's massive R179m refurbishment project that is being rolled out across its property portfolio.

KZN hotel completes major upgrade

The Hilton Durban in KwaZulu Natal has completed a major refurbishment that was done in five phases at a total cost of R200m. The full refurbishment is scheduled for completion in 2018 after the meetings and banqueting facilities have been upgraded.

Work already completed includes the lobby and Big Easy Winebar & Grill Durban by Ernie Els. The bar has been converted to a business lounge with redesigned suites, including

the Presidential Suites.

A new restaurant, Vasco's, has a show kitchen that doubles as a buffet, a tandoor oven, pasta station and grill station.

The hotel is celebrating its 20 years by transforming all 327 bedrooms into contemporary spaces and a new room type for families has been added. The air-conditioning units have been upgraded and all new infrastructure and better WiFi connection will be in all guest rooms by July.



The Hilton Durban in KwaZulu Natal. Photo: Hilton Hotels & Resorts

Cape Town hotel becomes first SA Marriott-branded hotel

The African Pride Crystal Towers Hotel & Spa has been rebranded as a Marriott Hotel.

Launched on May 12, the 180-room Cape Town Marriott Hotel Crystal Towers marks the introduction of the first Marriott-

branded hotel in South Africa since Marriott International bought Protea Hotels in 2014.

The roll-out of the conversion means new décor. The hotel lobby, the Greatroom, has been redecorated, as have the Orah

Bar & Lounge and the Acara Pool Bar & Terrace. The spaces are ideal for networking, working and having fun," says the hotel's gm, **Carolyn Jones**.

"Our recently opened Century City Conference Centre is

performing way ahead of our most optimistic expectations, attracting a growing number of national and international conferences. Having a Marriott-branded hotel substantially increases our offering and will

no doubt appeal in particular to our international delegates," says **Leon Cohen**, md of Rabie Property Group (the developer of Century City and the owner of the Cape Town Marriott Hotel Crystal Towers).

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“Use mobile apps for MICE”

TARYN NIGHTINGALE

“If you’re not exploring how you can use mobile applications to your advantage, you’re seriously missing out,” says **Ricky Reynolds** founder of new MICE travel app company, Apps in Travel. Ricky recently created Reynolds Travel’s Corporate Events app and is now launching a white-label version

of the product.

The app, which is currently available on Android and iPhone, is designed specifically for the MICE market. It is available to agents and their corporate clients.

The app has features such as information regarding a traveller’s itinerary (including flights and accommodation); a news feed which can

be constantly updated; a profile section where users can include pictures and a biography of themselves; and a “social wall” where users can upload and share videos and photos of the experience. Other features include a video section, where users can find teasers of the destination they will be visiting and a notifications setting where the user can set the app to send

updates on specific features.

The app can also be customised to suit the needs of the client. Ricky gives the example of an instance where a speaker at a conference was unable to complete a Q&A session due to time constraints. But because the app had been customised so that users could send questions to speakers by using the app, the speaker

could then respond and upload her answers onto the app the next day.

Although you may know Ricky from Reynolds Travel, he says he is in no way looking to steal anyone’s clientele. “I want to partner with agents who want to offer their clients something extra at an event. And of course I am willing to sign non-disclosure agreements and the like.” ■

Ebola in the DRC – no need to panic

DORINE REINSTEIN

AN EBOLA outbreak in the DRC remains limited to a remote area of the country, making travel or trade restrictions unnecessary for the time being, the World Health Organization (WHO) said last week. Currently there are a total of two confirmed, four probable and 16 suspected cases of Ebola in the DR Congo. Three deaths have been

confirmed among the probable cases.

However, despite the fact that the WHO advises against any travel or trade restrictions based on the current information available, neighbouring countries have stepped up security measures at airports. Kenya, Nigeria and Rwanda have all enforced intensified entry screening at airports, with Rwanda issuing an advisory against

travel to the DRC.

Industry players report that the situation hasn’t impacted on SA corporate travel to the area. **Noeline Heaton**, brand manager of HRG Rennies Travel, says for the moment, corporate travellers have not changed their booking patterns.

Ben Langner, md of Carlson Wagonlit Travel SA, agrees and says: “At this stage, there doesn’t seem to be great concern among

our corporate travellers about the recent outbreak of Ebola in the DRC.”

Ben adds that provided the outbreak remains contained, the impact on travel into Africa is likely to be minimal. He says: “CWT keeps its clients apprised of developments and has support structures in place should the need arise to locate and assist travellers in affected areas.”

“Ebola is a worry for

clients travelling to anywhere in Africa, but we are equally concerned about Cholera in Nairobi, Yellow Fever and Malaria,” says **Rachael Penaluna**, business manager of Sure Maritime Travel. She says: “We advise clients of no-go areas immediately and in the case of Ebola, we would suggest they do not travel to affected areas.”

For more on the situation regarding Yellow Fever, see page 8. ■

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A snapshot of the week's airline news



TAT talks Thailand

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) hosted its Johannesburg leg of the Amazing Thailand Roadshow on May 23 at the Hilton Hotel in Sandton. A lucky draw for a trip to Thailand, including flights on Singapore Airlines, was done by the Thai Ambassador, Dr. Pornchai Danvivathana. Pictured (from left) are, Tanes Petsuwan, TAT deputy governor for international marketing Europe, Africa, Middle East and the Americas, His Excellency Dr. Pornchai Danvivathana, Teersil Tapen, director of TAT UK and Lesley Simpson, SA representative of TAT. Photo: Erin Steenhoff

Travel clinics warn of Yellow Fever vaccine shortage

CANDICE MAY

TRAVEL clinics are expecting a shortage of the Yellow Fever vaccine. Without a Yellow Fever certificate, a traveller won't be granted entry into a country that falls within the Yellow Fever borders, says **Lucinda Tyler**, product manager of Club Travel. Agents agree that the most visited countries on the Yellow Fever list are Kenya,

Nigeria, Ghana, Angola, DRC and Rwanda. According to **Debbie Joubert**, md of Sure Travel 24-7, most corporate clients who travel to these countries do so regularly and already have Yellow Fever certificates, which are valid for ten years. Because clinics can't confirm when the stockpile will run out locally, **Monique Hartsliel**, regional sales manager of Pentravel, advises that agents contact

a clinic and check availability before they accept final payment from a client. Debbie says travellers can get the vaccination from any travel clinic or general practitioner. In addition to getting the vaccination, she suggests enquiring whether or not it is necessary to get malaria medication as there have been some unexpected outbreaks in several African countries recently. ■

Ethiopian and SIA expand codeshare

ETHIOPIAN Airlines and Singapore Airlines will expand their codeshare agreement from June 1 to offer daily flights between Africa and Asia. Ethiopian Airlines will offer a daily non-stop service to Singapore from Addis Ababa, allowing customers access to multiple destinations in Australia, China, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Thailand and Vietnam serviced by Singapore Airlines. In return, Singapore Airlines' customers will access Ethiopian Airlines' African network which includes Botswana, Burkina Faso, Chad, Cote D'Ivoire, Kenya, Nigeria, Mozambique, The Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

All-A380 on Emirates to Spain

ALL Emirates flights from Dubai to both its destinations in Spain will be operated by A380 aircraft from September 1. In addition to its existing double-daily A380 service to Barcelona, the airline now operates a double-daily A380 service to Madrid. Flight EK143 from Dubai to Madrid, which is currently operated by a Boeing 777-300ER but will switch over to an A380 on September 1, will have a three-class configuration - 14 private suites in first class, 76 flat-bed seats in business class, and 399 in economy. EK143 departs from Dubai International Airport at 14h30 and arrives in Madrid at 20h20. EK144 departs Madrid at 22h05 and arrives in Dubai at 07h15 the following day.

New international airport for Australia

SYDNEY is set to get a second international airport. The R49 billion (AU\$5bn) Western Sydney Airport will be located at Badgers Creek, 50km west of the city centre. Sydney Airport Group, the owner of Kingsford Smith Airport (Sydney Airport) has decided not to build the new airport under its 'right of first refusal'. The new airport will instead be constructed by the Australian government. The current Sydney Airport, which is 8km south of the city, has become increasingly stretched due to increased demand in recent years.

Etihad to launch double-daily to Sydney

ETIHAD will introduce double-daily flights on its Abu Dhabi-Sydney route from October 29, all operated by its flagship A380 aircraft. The new A380s will feature the carrier's 'The Residence' three-room suite, which can accommodate two passengers, nine 'First Apartments', as well as 70 Business Studios and 415 economy seats. The new schedule, which takes effect on October 29, is as follows: EY450 departs Abu Dhabi at 09h25 and arrives in Sydney the following day at 06h15. Return flight, EY451, departs Sydney at 16h20 and arrives in Abu Dhabi at 23h55. The second flight, EY454 departs Abu Dhabi at 22h15 and arrives in Sydney the following day at 19h15. Return flight, EY455, departs Sydney at 21h50 and arrives in Abu Dhabi the following day at 05h40.

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Sabre

TNW8152SD

No 3
in a series of
8 reports

TNW EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS SURVEY



Are you in the right sector?

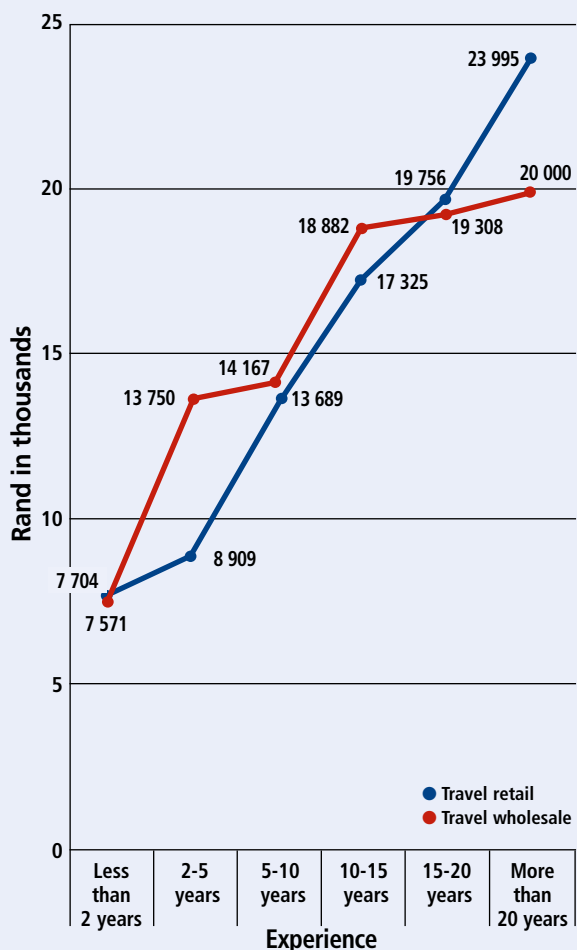
Anton Marsh's third report on the *TNW* survey that explores agents' work conditions. From pay to educationals, from after-hours duty to what agents love and what they hate - it's all in the survey.

Working on the retail side of travel really only pays off when you have about 15 years of experience.

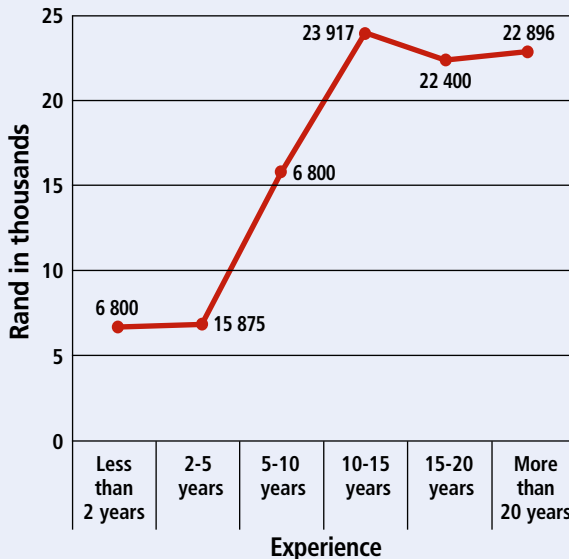
That's the point where people in retail start earning more than their colleagues in wholesale.

In the recent *TNW* survey in which 981 people in the trade participated, the basic pay gap increases to 20% in favour of retail for those with 20 or more years' experience. On top of this, 38% of consultants also earn commission.

Wholesale vs retail salaries by experience



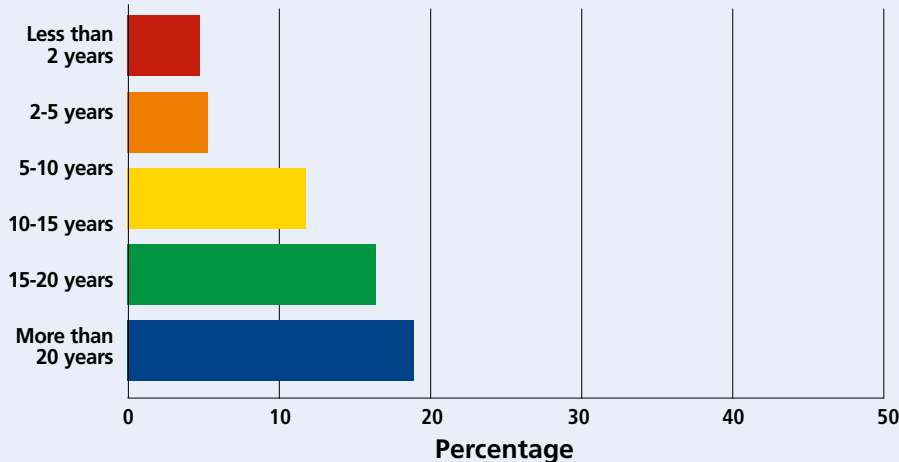
Average ITC salary by experience



Another subsector of the travel industry is independent travel consultants. This sector has seen the most change in the last few years as more consortia offer it as an option within their group and ITC specialists like eTravel and Travel Counsellors continue to grow. Seventeen percent of the 772 respondents that were involved in consulting worked as an ITC. Over 75% of ITCs have at least ten years' experience and over 40% have more than 20 years' experience.

ITCs enjoy the best earnings growth between five to 15 years' experience. The time they see their peak earnings is at 15 years' experience. ■

How long have ITCs been working in the travel industry?



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R60 000

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Launching
June



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Last-minute bookings on the rise

DORINE REINSTEIN

OUR operators report a major increase in last-minute bookings this year.

Theresa Szejwallo, md of The Travel Corporation, says since February, Trafalgar has seen an increase in travellers booking last-minute deals.

Megan D’Arcy, product manager of kulula holidays says the reason for this trend is the affordability of the packages and the volatility of the ROE. She says travellers tend to wait for the rand to strengthen against the USD, and once it does, they ask for quotes, book, and pay in quick succession.

Megan explains point-to-point destinations like Mauritius, Thailand and the Maldives are the easiest to sell last-minute. However, destinations like the US have also seen a slight increase in last-minute travel. She says: “Some clients book, pay and depart for the USA in under

seven days.”

Flora Fubbs, gm product, marketing and operations of The Holiday Factory, says travellers would usually be more conservative and book their December holidays in advance. But this has changed, and travellers are now more willing to wait to the very last minute to book whatever specials are available.

Vicky Steinhart, marketing and product manager of Pentravel, says Pentravel has also seen booking lead times decrease significantly. She says flexibility is key for travellers wanting to take advantage of last-minute deals.

Theresa suggests that travel agents always offer their clients the option of a last-minute deal. “Give a customer one quote and they can just say yes or no. If you give them two or three options, you give them something to consider.” ■



Hello Ballito!

Pentravel recently opened its first store in Ballito, KwaZulu Natal. After two short weeks, the shop had already made a turnover of half a million rand. Pictured, celebrating the opening of the new store, are (from left) consultants, **Sarah McMullan** and **Simone Smith**, **Loryn Holmes**, regional sales manager, **Katie Cragg**, shop manager and **Kirsty Godwin**, consultant. Photo: Dorine Reinstein

To the point

Jafferji Beach Retreat will open in Matemwe, Zanzibar, during the first week of July – Cinnamon Collection has announced. The beachfront boutique hotel and spa, which has been under construction for three years, is on the northeast coast of Zanzibar, 50 minutes from the airport and the capital, Stone Town. Accommodation will comprise ten suites, spread over three villas. Two of the villas will have three suites each and the third villa, four suites. All suites overlook the ocean. Facilities will include a day spa, gift shop, doctor on request, WiFi, babysitting services, wedding services and a restaurant. Activities include day trips to Mnemba (a marine conservation area), reef walks, kite-surfing, dhow cruises, cooking classes, diving and snorkelling.

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- Ethical Conduct
- Trustworthiness



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ITCs & Homeworkers

The independent retail model comes in different shapes and forms but continues to expand as consultants grow wise to its benefits. Michelle Colman and Sue van Winsen report.

The evolution of the ITC

SINCE the early beginnings of the independent travel consultant (ITC) movement in South Africa back in 1999, the sector has evolved to include a variety of models.

Garth Wolff, founder and ceo of eTravel, recalls the background of those early times, when his consortium became an early adopter of a new generation of retail travel operations.

eTravel, he says, began as a grouping of independent travel consultants, but was later extended to include independent travel companies, as the number of staff an eTravel consultant employs is unlimited. "However, it is commonly accepted that the term ITC more often than not refers to one or perhaps two consultants operating their own travel business."

Other established retail chains also took up the ITC concept, putting their own spin on it. For many, the ITC division was run as an additional business stream to traditional agency operations. Some would say this pitted the two against each other and split the consortium's focus.

Broadly speaking, there are variations on two core genres – the ITC and the independent travel agent (ITA). The former processes all transactions through a consortium of



Garth Wolff

members, while the latter is a ticketing agent who processes only air sales through a hosting entity.

The ITC model veers towards a full suite of administrative back office support, such as invoicing, supplier payments, ticketing, as well as ADM, fares, sales and marketing, training and IT-related assistance. The ITC receives monthly commissions and sometimes overrides.

The ITA model provides access to negotiated fares and a ticketing platform, without the administrative support. It's a model that suits good administrators, able to invest time and resources into management, marketing and sales. Proponents of this model point out that ITAs remain in full control of bank accounts and payments to principals.

Which consortium is best suited to you?

TNW spoke to some consortiums to find out the specific benefits each offers ITCs and homeworkers.

eTravel

eTravel is a full-support ITC consortium and, says **Garth Wolff**, the market leader in terms of revenue generated per annum on just ITC business.

It offers a long list of administrative functions, including the allocation, reconciliation and management of debtors, creditors and cash flow.

This is critical, according to Garth, because while ITCs may be exceptional at customer service and sales, they are often not great accounting administrators. Further, the time it takes to fulfil administration often leads ITCs into postponing these functions, and thereby commission claims.

"ITCs' clients are comforted in the fact that

qualified personnel are custodians of the funds they pay into eTravel's bank account, rather than relying on the ITC, who they would prefer to be focusing on their travel requirements, personalised service offering, duty of care and any emergencies." Suppliers, for their part, can be confident that eTravel, as the host company, safeguards them against possible bad debt.

eTravel ITCs earn both commissions and overrides. "We have always had a philosophy of paying out more to our ITCs, as and when we are in a position to do so. In May 1999, when we first opened our doors, we paid out 35% to ITCs and kept 65%; now on average we

are paying out 81% to ITCs and retaining 19%, before override payments are made," says Garth. "eTravel is owned by one shareholder who does not take out large dividends annually, but always reinvests into the business by increasing commissions to ITCs, covering some additional costs along the way to lessen the load on ITCs, as well as ensuring that our staff receive increases annually."

eTravel prioritises personal contact with ITCs, visiting them countrywide. "More and more corporates and in-houses are embracing the ITC model and will only do so if they know they are backed by a proper host company."

To page 12

We're offering agents a first-class ticket to the big time.

We've just launched our own ITC model through the BidTravel group – and we think you'll love it. As an ITC, you'll have access to the full suite of tools, including ticketing and technical support, access to special fares and volume deals, as well as networking opportunities.

Call us now on **011 234 2233**, and let's talk about how we can give you the tools and team to take your business to new heights.





From page 11

Travel Counsellors

Travel Counsellors, says gm **Mladen Lukic**, is a full-service, partnership ITC model, as “we don’t believe that realistically anyone can create a competitive environment on their own against the major brands”.

It operates on two precepts, he says – to offer a reasonable amount of independence to travel consultants and thereby allow them to create wealth; and to supplement any skills shortages consultants may have, no matter how good they are.

Mladen believes that the ‘independent’ nature of an ITC is perhaps a misnomer, as anyone affiliated with a consortium is not truly independent. But although not 100%, the independence offered by Travel Counsellors is at its maximum without incurring



Mladen Lukic

risk for the ITC.

The transaction in retail travel, says Mladen, is only the last piece in the puzzle. All the other skills that go into the game are supplemented by Travel Counsellors.

These include:

- Assistance to the ITC in adapting to the changing needs and appetites of their businesses, with new business plans, goals and road maps to get there.
- Full technological support that keeps abreast of changing technological needs.
- Marketing; Travel Counsellors’ expertise is targeted, specific messaging at specific times, based on an understanding of the customer’s journey. “It’s sophisticated, technology-dependent and intensive and nullifies mass-media advertising,” says Mladen.
- Commercial support and higher commissions, of up to 20% in some instances.

Harvey World Travel

“As part of the BidTravel Group, Harvey World ITCs are able to leverage deals from our group’s massive volumes, whilst they have the autonomy of running their own businesses and the flexibility ITCs require,” says **Monica Horn**, product manager.

Harvey World ITCs have access to a suite of tools that includes ticketing and

technical support, access to special fares and volume deals as well as valuable networking opportunities.

“As trading conditions tighten, it’s important to share best business practices and grow together. Instead of competing with one another, together we complete each other,” says Monica.

Club Travel

Club Travel offers two partner options for agents seeking the independent route, says **Jo Fraser**, franchise director. Essential to both is the ticketing facility and Club Travel’s negotiated airfares.

“Consultants need the ticket in conjunction with our fares in order to be competitive in the market. All our solutions include our global fares system, so consultants have access to better availability and have the free service of our fare specialist team,” she explains.

The first partner solution is an independent travel agency option, for all types of operations – corporate, leisure, retail, wholesale or online. The partner uses the services of Club Travel’s highly skilled ticketing team to issue all airline tickets through their GDS of choice. Although independently run, full access is given to Club Travel’s industry expertise, including all negotiated fares and travel technology. “You



Jo Fraser

have the behind-the-scenes backing of our fares specialist, yield, product and franchise support departments,” says Jo.

The second option is as an IATA-licensed associate travel agency. These partners retain their own IATA licence and branding, but benefit from better override agreements from Club Travel’s revenue-based negotiations with all airlines and preferred partners.

Once again there is full access to all the global availability platforms and support.

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A note from George

A journey of discovery and enrichment

The celebration of this major milestone generates many feelings! I have so many reasons to be happy and proud, but also to be humble and grateful.

Back in 1992, Cruises International was nothing more than a dream and a burning desire. A dream to succeed and a desire to be independent. My dreams had nothing to do with travel or cruising. There was no masterplan, nor any clearly defined goals; just a strong desire to become successful.

You see, from a young age I admired my father and his friends. They were successful, confident, well spoken, full of experience and sound advice; most of which I could not comprehend at the time. They were well dressed, well travelled, well educated and spoke many languages. They drove beautiful cars and had beautiful homes - one in Athens and at least one by the sea for the summer season.

I wanted to be like them but had no idea how they got to where they were. I could only judge by the results - education, good manners and good taste. Some of you may consider these traits to be a bit "old school", but they are not. These are values that have stood the test of time over millennia and have survived fads, many which have come and gone as fast as they arrived. Almost subconsciously, I pursued these values.

Another of my traits, which I've had since a very young boy, was (and still is) my love for the sea. I am a "Cancerian" and those who believe in these things tell me that "Cancer" is a "water sign", whatever that means. But there you have it, perhaps there is some truth in astrology! I was involved in everything that had to do with water: swimming, sailing, water-skiing, diving, fishing, anything, as long as I was on, in, or near the water.

When I finished my studies and military service, I was lucky enough to be given a good position as deputy marketing manager at Epirotiki Cruises, the largest cruise line at the time, owned by an old Greek family and very successful. Work brought me to South Africa in 1991. I came here on assignment to determine the size of the market and its potential to produce cruise passengers to cruise the Greek islands and the Mediterranean onboard Epirotiki's ships.

A week or so into my assignment, I realised that my stars were aligned. Here I was, wanting to start a business so that I could realise my dream of success and independence; here was a country that was about to enter a new chapter in its history with promising potential and no one was promoting cruises, a product that I knew so well!

"Here was a country that was about to enter a new chapter in its history with promising potential and no one was promoting cruises, a product that I knew so well!"

I was making a name for myself - Mr Cruise! I was not getting rich but I was earning more money than I had ever imagined. And the potential was endless!

The business grew in leaps and bounds. Soon I did not require the salary from Epirotiki. I secured more cruise lines that wanted to trade in South Africa. Royal Caribbean was the brand which really took off. I could not believe that this giant corporation trusted me - a one-man show - with their representation, but that was the big break. Soon Cruises International needed staff, premises, technology, corporate identity, PR, marketing, accounts, and all the nuts and bolts any properly run and managed company requires. I went to Wits to do a post-graduate course in business management. The support from the industry kept growing, sales kept growing and the company kept growing.



Without hesitation, I called my office in Piraeus and told my boss not to worry about the assignment. I would stay in South Africa and open an agency for them. They agreed and even offered to assist with set-up costs and pay me a salary until I had reached a certain volume of production. It could not have been any better!

During the first few years, I would spend my days visiting travel agents and getting to know each one personally. I taught them about cruising and the many benefits it offered them and their clients. In the afternoons, I would collect all the requests and send them by fax to Epirotiki. In the mornings, I would respond to all the agents with confirmations. I also took many educational groups on the ships.

I had a profitable business. Nothing big, but for me it was everything! My dreams were being realised. I was independent, respected and successful.

Continued on page H





CRUISES
international



Royal Caribbean Drops Anchor In Sandton

Now you can recommend Luxurious Cruise Holidays
(Without going overboard on price)

NEWS

Royal Caribbean Cruise Line represented in South Africa

Royal Caribbean Cruise Line, the world's largest cruise line by passenger capacity, has appointed **Cruises International** as their representatives for South Africa, opening up a new era in vacation possibilities to South African travellers.

The company, entering its 34th year of service, operates one of the most modern fleets in the cruise industry, ranging from the intimate 714-passenger **SUN VIKING** to the 2354-passenger twins **MONARCH OF THE SEAS** and **MAJESTY OF THE SEAS**, the largest cruise ships in the world. Known for its innovative interiors, Royal Caribbean pioneered sea-going cabins with glass walls, expansive pool decks and the Viking Crown Lounge which wraps around the smokestack, high above the sea.

Besides cruises in the Caribbean, Royal Caribbean offers South Africans a choice of Bermuda, the Bahamas, Mexico, Alaska, Norwegian Fjords, British Isles, Scandinavia, Russia and the Mediterranean.

Royal Caribbean delivers a perfect vacation to young and old, couples, singles, families, sports enthusiasts - in



Cruises International are proud to announce that they have been appointed General Sales Agents for Royal Caribbean, one of the finest cruise lines in the world!

As such, they are able to offer an outstanding selection of cruises on five-star luxury super-liners (Majesty of the Seas, Sovereign of the Seas, Nordic Empress, Song of America etc) to exotic and unforgettable destinations: Grand Caribbean & Panama Canal • Caribbean & Bahamas • New York & Bermuda • Alaska • California & Mexico • Scandinavia • Russia • Europe & Canary Islands.

How dealing with Cruises International will benefit you:

- Direct link with Royal Caribbean head office in America ensures fast and accurate confirmation of bookings ... and customer satisfaction!
- Offers convenient source of printed material, including magnificent full-colour brochures featuring Royal Caribbean super-liners and cruises.
- Professional and friendly people are at your beck and call to give you all the details and information you may require ... quickly and efficiently.



1994

Cap'n outstanding

CAPTAIN OF HIS SHIP George Argyropoulos, md of Johannesburg-based Cruises International which represents Royal Caribbean in SA, won the 1995 outstanding achievement award from Royal Caribbean at its recent conference in Miami. This is the second consecutive year George (pictured in Miami) has won the award. Royal Caribbean is one of the world's largest cruise lines



1996

Argyropoulos

Sweden does a business achieve growth rates in excess of 1000 percent. George Argyropoulos's Cruises International has gone even better, with growth of this magnitude in the seven months to July 31 this year.

Argyropoulos started Cruises International with two staff members, including himself, four years ago. Today the firm operates with a computerized on-line system staffed by a team

of staff. In addition, Cruises International offers a careful selection of quality cruise lines, which offer the best value for money committed in the market.



| 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| George launches Cruises International in SA. | Cruises International sells 300 pax for the year. | Became the GSA of Royal Caribbean International. | Cruises International receives an outstanding sales achievement award for Royal Caribbean. George cruises on Royal Caribbean International for the first time. | Cruises International receives an outstanding sales achievement award for Royal Caribbean. George cruises on Royal Caribbean International for the first time. |

and SO MUCH MORE...

2006

2011

It's a Sailabration

Cruises International is the largest international cruise line representative in Southern Africa. With one of the world's best cruise lines in our portfolio, we offer each and every client the voyage of their dreams. By choosing Cruises International as your trade partner, you will **grow your business** and **earn high commission** by introducing your clients to the pleasure and convenience of a cruise holiday. So come and sailabrate with us!

AZAMARA
AMAWATERWAYS
CRISTAL
SEADREAM
OCEANIA CRUISES
SEABOURN
Celebrity X Cruises
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For further information and our latest specials contact Cruises International on 011 327 0327 or visit www.cruises.co.za

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Announcing The Great Shipmates Adventure... take part in the interactive... treasures... and have fun while we help... challenges - all geared to... year anniversary "sailabration"... the online cruise of the year...

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hands on deck!



2010

| 🚢 2006 | 🚢 2007 | 🚢 2009 | 🚢 2010 | 🚢 2011 |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| Freedom of the Seas is the largest cruise ship in the Cruises International portfolio at this time with a total number of pax of 3 634. | The 15 year anniversary of Cruises International with a staff complement of 13. | Cruises International stays strong during the recession and shows year-on-year growth of 15%. | Cruises International receives another accolade from Royal Caribbean for recognition for outstanding sales achievement called - "The World Traveller Award". | With AmaWaterways now in the portfolio, Cruises International becomes the largest cruise GSA in South Africa, representing nine international cruise brands. |



2012

AWARDS THROUGH THE YEARS

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Rccl | Outstanding Performance Award (1994) |
| Rccl | Outstanding Sales Performance (1996) |
| Rccl | Sales Goal Achievement (1997) |
| Crystal Cruises | Sales Achievement Award (1997) |
| Rccl | Special Achievement Award (1998) |
| Crystal Cruises | Sales Achievement Award (1999) |
| Rccl | Outstanding Achievement Award (2000) |
| Crystal Cruises | Top Revenue Producer (2002) |
| Rccl | Outstanding Sales (2003) |
| Rccl | International Representative of the Year (2004) |
| Rccl | Outstanding Sales Performance (2005) |
| Crystal Cruises | Top Producer for Revenue Growth UK, Europe, Middle East, Africa (2006) |
| Crystal Cruises | Top Producer for New Business (2006) |
| Rccl | Outstanding Sales Performance (2007) |
| Crystal Cruises | Top Producer for New Business (2007) |
| Rccl | International Representative of the Year EMEA (2008) |
| Crystal Cruises | Top Producer Revenue Growth (2008) |
| Crystal Cruises | Top Producer New Business (2008) |
| Rccl | World Travel Award – Africa Leading Cruise Line (2010) |
| Rccl | Europe – Middle East – Africa International Representative of the Year (2010) |
| Oceania Cruises | Continued support, dedication and outstanding sales (2010) |
| Azamara | Outstanding Sales Performance Award (2013) |
| Crystal Cruises | Million Dollar Producer (2013) |
| Rccl | Outstanding Sales Performance Award (2014) |
| Crystal Cruises | Million Dollar Producer (2014) |
| Crystal Cruises | Top Producer (2015) |
| ASATA | Diners Award – Exceptional Commitment (2015) |
| Rccl | Viking Crown Award – 15 year anniversary |
| Crystal Cruises | 15 Years Recognition Award |

🚢 2012

Cruises International turns 20 and George turns 50!

🚢 2015

Record breaking year at Cruises International with a total passenger number of 10 000 sailing in 2015. George receives the Exceptional Commitment Award from Asata.

🚢 2016

Moved to our state-of-the-art building at Willow Crescent, St, Andrews, Bedfordview, an iconic landmark in Jozi.

🚢 2017

Igniting the ultimate dream vacation for 25 years with a staff complement of 25.



CRUISES *international*

Continued from page A

Every few years I had to look for new premises to house the team. We were receiving awards from the cruise lines and our trade partners.

And so the story kept unfolding and we found ourselves where we are today: a mature company with 25 associates working together in our own custom-made premises, the nicest in the country, with over 10 000 sales a year and nine amazing cruise lines which we proudly represent.

Of course I am extremely happy and proud of Cruises International for what it is today. But, I also bow with respect and gratitude to my associates - present and past - and the cruise lines who trusted me. Most of all, to each and every member of this magnificent industry of ours who believed in me and our brands, believed in my promise. Without you, my dreams would have remained just that: dreams. So, from the bottom of my heart, I say thank you.

Of course this is not the end of our voyage. The future is bright and full of promise and potential. It is up to us, collectively as an industry, to get out there and introduce everyone one to the best way of enjoying a holiday. Show them why their next trip has to be a cruise holiday!

All of you who have similar dreams and desires to mine, you can make your dreams come true. If I did it, anyone can. In spite of the technological changes the basic ingredients of success in our industry remain the same: knowledge, experience, honesty, integrity and empathy. If you adhere to and practice daily, these five simple words, you will be successful.

Of course, there is a long, bright future ahead. The potential to grow the cruise market is huge. Myself and the Cruises International team will continue with the same enthusiasm and commitment to assist each and every one of you to create and grow successful cruise-selling businesses.

George Argyropoulos



WIN A CRUISE!

The Cruises International Johannesburg team celebrates 25 years of cruising and looks forward to so much more.

Agents who book a cruise between June 1 and July 31, 2017, on any of the brands in the Cruises International portfolio, stand a chance to win a seven-night Mediterranean cruise **WITH** flights and transfers onboard Royal Caribbean's newest and hippest Symphony of the Seas. Every booking counts as an entry into the lucky draw. *T&Cs apply.*



ITCs & Homeworkers



The new Renniestravel.com website provides ITCs with access to various sources of content.

From page 12

Rennies Unlimited

Rennies Unlimited "is the ideal ITC solution for today's modern day travel heroes", says **Lanice Newton**, brand manager of Rennies Specialist Brands. "To keep the Rennies Unlimited ITC ahead of the curve, we offer ITCs their own web domain – a dynamic and uniquely branded travel booking website where they can independently price and package their clients' travel experiences."

Lanice says in order to cater for every type of ITC, from the serious travel industry guru to a travel enthusiast with limited experience, the solution offers tiered, volume-based commercial models. "The ITC's website will be powered by our Renniestravel.com technology which instantly

gives them access to multi-GDS content, content aggregator and direct supplier integrations in one space."

"We offer ITCs their own web domain – a dynamic and uniquely branded travel booking website."

She says Rennies also connects consultants to a tribe of fellow travel ITCs so that they can share experiences through webinars, networking events and learning forums.

"Lastly, we have their back. By partnering with us, an industry stalwart in our own right, ITCs have the full support and might of our brand," adds Lanice.

Suppliers under pressure to keep up

THE growing number of ITCs in the market presents a challenge for suppliers to maintain regular interactions with the sector and keep relationships strong.



Lance Smith, Lance Smith
executive Sales,

Avis Budget Southern Africa, says: "Considering the growing number and size of ITCs, social media trends and a changing travel market, suppliers will need to review how they support ITCs to ensure that they remain relevant in the future."

Currently, the car-hire company's commercial and marketing relationships with the independent sector are managed via the head offices of each ITC's

travel group, and detailed information is communicated via Travelinfo. ITCs have access to the dedicated Avis Budget Travel sales team, call centre and GDS help desks.

On a practical level, ITCs are offered a 60-day worldwide account, subject to normal terms and conditions, and are also assigned a dedicated Avis Budget number to have commissions directed to them. Each ITC can enjoy ClubRed membership, which drives additional rewards, redeemable as the ITC desires.

Access to training is provided to ITCs via their head office intranets and relationships with all GDSs.

TAG

TAG says its model is simple in that all its agents get the same deal. "Our ITCs get 85% of all revenue and they get 70% of all overrides, including GDS payments," explains TAG director, **Jonathan Gerber**. "There are no minimum fees and it's a hassle-free start-up process."

"We are selective and won't just take anyone on board. We are a niche, high-touch offering that specialises in established ITCs that see the value in our financial model."

TAG also recently adopted a ticketing model for ITCs who don't need all the bells and whistles but instead just want a basic



"We are selective and won't just take anyone on board."
Jonathan Gerber

ticketing solution. "This is more for the smaller guys, as our full offering is more beneficial financially," adds Jonathan.

Another key differentiator is TAG's online corporate booking tool. "Whilst the ITC is generally a smaller-type business, this gives it the feel of a fully fledged TMC, which they can combine with their own service. We think this, combined with mobile, is where clients are moving."

TAG says its approach is to act as a partner and not just a provider to its ITCs. "It is not for us to tell them how to run their businesses, but we do step in when asked."

Flight Centre

Flight Centre's ITC solution focuses on several key aspects in order to differentiate itself from other consortiums. One unique aspect is that it provides a full start-up package including access to systems, a laptop and marketing collateral so that ITCs can hit the ground running.

Additionally, it offers favourable commission structures, access to all

Flight Centre's corporate and leisure deals and a

"We also offer a team-working environment, so you can go on leave with the peace of mind that your business is going to be looked after."

24-hour ticketing solution. "We also offer a team-working environment, so

you can go on leave with the peace of mind that your business is going to be looked after," says **Chantal Gouws**, area leader FCA for the Flight Centre Travel Group.

A few of the other benefits include exclusive Flight Centre top achiever trips, its National Ball awards, a dedicated wholesale team, along with marketing, product, systems, IT and finance support teams.

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What's your

You deserve hard-hitting services from your host company. Services that give you the support you need and the rewards you work so hard for. But there's some conflicting messaging out there. Do you go for a full-support model that costs up to 20% more in commissions, or choose eTravel's comprehensive hosting service? Here's our unbiased take on the debate:

ADMIN COSTS

It's no fairytale – admin is expensive. Especially when you have to do it yourself. Think about the time it takes you to process paperwork, follow up on commissions and reconcile creditors, debtors and cash books. That's a job on its own!

As an ITC, there's nothing more valuable than your time. So 'cheaper' offerings that leave you doing the admin yourself can end up costing you more; a blind spot you can't afford when running your own business. eTravel's admin support prevents this in two ways:

1. *Saved time:*

We save you **hours** every day by managing everything from invoicing to supplier payments, ADMs, ticketing, commission tracking, reconciliations, refunds and more. And with a specialised fares department, BSP, a business development team, preferred partners, preferential rates, quality control, and online facilities, your day is open to spend on work that pays.

2. *Resources:*

Cabinets, filing apparatus, stationery, shelving space, and fancy equipment... none of this is necessary when your back-office is managed by eTravel. With no admin costs, you can **save up to 35%** on your existing office structure.

TECHNOLOGY

Cleverly marketed technology can make anything look advanced. After all, you want to keep up with a changing industry, right? But not all technologies guarantee success – especially if they cost you an extra 20% of your income.

As the industry leaders and the ITC pioneers in Africa, eTravel has repeatedly proven that we have what you need to build a high-functioning business that delivers returns. Our proven strategies, industry experience, expert team, and tested technologies are what work.

THE COSTS

Marketing, web design and fancy technologies are even more appealing when they're offered as 'free'. But look closely at what you're really paying for those 'free' services: how much of your **monthly commission** are you giving away to get them? And, if it's something that can

work worth?

add real value, what would it cost to pay for it if you went to a specialist instead? Choosing eTravel may seem like it'll cost more initially (which is, in fairness, the only claim some of our competitors can make about us), but with an **additional 20% of your hard-earned money in your account every month**, eTravel still saves you thousands in the long run.

PLUS, YOU ALSO SAVE MONEY BY DOING AWAY WITH:

- IATA licensing and the resources for managing it
- BSP staffing costs
- High salary bills
- Franchise fees
- Compulsory branding
- Low payouts (Keep up to 85% on all fees / commissions and up to 80% on all overrides.)

AND BEYOND

They say the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and that's really the case at eTravel. Because with us, you don't just pay less, save time, get an army of professionals that support your business 24 hours a day, and harness the full back-office support you need to run a first-class ITC; you join a family. Over 200 ITCs have chosen eTravel, **and they're all family.**

Like a family, we're known for honesty, transparency and keeping our promises. We have a reputation for being flexible, making decisions based on merit, and treating each member as an individual. We pride ourselves on support, understanding, mutual motivation, and long-term partnerships. **And we stick together, through thick and thin.**

WHAT'S MORE, IN THIS FAMILY YOU ALSO GET:

- All of the freedom of an individual, not an employee. You keep your brand, your logo, your clients, and the decision-making power for your business.
- No tricky sales targets
- Up to 85% payouts on all fees and commissions generated, paid to you the month immediately following the invoice (not only after the client has travelled)

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My journey as an ITC

TNW charts the path of exceptional ITCs/ITAs in their journeys to success.

Janine Corry

24 Point 7 Travel Studio in association with eTravel, Somerset West

My travel career started 20 years ago as a junior corporate consultant at an in-house. From there, I joined one of South Africa's largest corporate agencies and spent many years servicing blue-chip corporate accounts. I loved every moment. It was a real learning experience and I'm grateful for all the company taught me. When the commute got too much, I joined a small agency closer to home. This was



Janine Corry

short-lived as I was itching to step out of traditional agency ways.

Honestly, becoming an ITC was a selfish decision, wanting the perfect balance of independence, flexible working hours, and the

ability to spend quality mommy-time with my son, Tristan. I became an ITC when he was just three months old; 10 years later, I have absolutely no regrets.



There are many ITC models out there, however eTravel, I believe, is the market leader, operating since 1999; 18 years in the industry and still going strong! They are true to their slogan – "Big enough to matter. But small enough to care." Garth (eTravel ceo) and his team are phenomenal, always willing to guide you with an open-door policy that I can vouch for 100%.

eTravel has leveraged preferred partner relationships with many suppliers, which comes in handy when you need waivers or favours! But

more importantly, knowing that you are not alone and that you are backed by a team of back-office, admin, processing, ticketing and behind-the-scenes staff

"I always work on the run – whether in the office, over a cup of coffee, next to the sports field or after hours on the couch."

makes life so much easier! My business consists of 95% corporate travel with a handful of regular leisure clients. My leisure

travellers add some colour to my otherwise very busy corporate work.

As I am self-employed, I always work on the run – whether in the office, over a cup of coffee, next to the sports field or after hours on the couch. I believe you need to walk the talk 24/7. 'Me time' is limited.

There is no doubt that being an ITC is hard work, however the rewards and self-gratification make it well worth it. It's a scary thought stepping out of your comfort zone... focus, be patient, do your research properly and just do it!

Alwin Nell

Abroad with Alwin, Three Anchor Bay, Cape Town (Club Travel)

After travelling and working overseas for about 10 years, including five years in the cruise industry, I decided to become a travel agent. I joined one of the largest travel companies in South Africa and remained with them for 12 years, 10 of which I served as manager of one of their Cape Town branches.

At one point I was no longer happy with many of the company changes being implemented, especially regarding which suppliers I could or could not use. As a travel

expert, I felt I needed to be able to offer my clients the best possible products and suppliers and not to be restricted to anyone specifically. I have developed great relationships with my suppliers over the years and I was not prepared to give this up.

Money, and the fact that I wanted to work for myself were other major influences for me. Although I earned an extremely good salary, cost-cutting measures were enforced that negatively influenced my bonuses and

overall earnings.

As an ITC I now receive fantastic front-end commissions from the airlines I sell and I am able to discount my rates tremendously and still earn an awesome commission. By being more competitive with my pricing and more productive at my desk, even though I work fewer hours than before, my earnings have sky rocketed.

Club Travel offers its ITCs front-end commission and supplier/airline overrides. Except for a nominal ticketing fee, you

essentially earn 100% of what you sell and you also share in the override spoils. Their contracted airfares are also the best I have seen in this business. Besides all of this, their people are amazing and the support structure is outstanding.

Although I am running my own business, they are always there for me if I need any advice or assistance.

My business is mostly leisure although I do have a couple of small corporates. I am looking to expand my business. I will bring another consultant on board in the near future and I also want to target a new overseas market for inbound luxury travel."

For consultants considering going the independent route, believe in yourself and take that leap of faith. It's also essential that you have an established and loyal client base. Remember, your clients have formed a relationship with you and not the company you



"I felt I needed to be able to offer my clients the best possible products and suppliers and not to be restricted to anyone specifically."

Alwin Nell

work for. It's only natural they would want to stick with you and support your business.

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Roslyn de la Hunt

Gold Travel Counsellor, Centurion

I started in travel back in January 2000 as a junior consultant in a travel agency in Sandton City and I have always been in retail, dealing with leisure and corporate travel.

I have a passion for travel and for translating that into servicing clients, whether it be a once-in-a-lifetime holiday, business trip or just a quick weekend getaway.

In 2009, a number of factors played a part in my decision to become an ITC. I was spending many hours each day on the N1, just getting to and from work. My husband and I had plans to start a family and, as a result, I needed more flexibility and autonomy. I

still wanted to stay in travel but I knew something had to change.

That is when I came across Travel Counsellors, who were still fairly new in South Africa. Their leadership style, systems and the care and passion for their people was evident from the very first meeting and made my decision a very easy one.

It was a giant leap of faith in myself and trusting my ability to become an ITC, but ultimately it was the best decision I ever made. I have been with Travel Counsellors for almost eight years and I have never looked back. Their world-class systems



Roslyn de la Hunt

and IT infrastructure and the support one receives on a daily basis from management and fellow Travel Counsellors is the enabler to be the best version of yourself. So even

though you are running your own business, it is great to know there is always a team of people rooting for your ultimate success.

My business is a mix of corporate and leisure

– roughly a 60/40 split, although I do enjoy the leisure side more.

By leveraging my clients' networks and through the effective use of Phenix (Travel Counsellors' in-house booking system) I can not only provide my clients with the best deals but also consistently increase my sales margins, thereby incrementally growing my business year on year.

The best advice I can offer to any aspiring ITC is to consciously make the mind shift from being a transactional travel agent to becoming a proactive business owner and to always be true to your client and yourself.

Lance and David van den Heever-Liebenberg

Marmalade Toast bespoke travel & destination management (Harvey World Travel)

David has a corporate travel background, having worked in a senior capacity at agencies on multinational accounts. I started this journey as a corporate traveller, who spent 10 days a month out of the country. When we decided to start the agency, it was to fill a need that was lacking – providing an almost intimate and fully bespoke service tailored to each client's needs.

Over the years, we refined our offering – we don't fit any 'normal' label that the industry currently applies. We have clients all over the world and a core focus on luxury, experiential travel and travel to southeast Asia and Indochina (we lived in Thailand for almost three years). But, having said that, we do inbound, global outbound, corporate travel, midrange holidays, LGBT travel, event logistics, luxury holiday packages, yacht and aircraft charters as well as wholesale to other agents.

When we started, we chose a name that would set us apart and reflect the uniqueness of our product offering – these factors, as well as the red tape and cost to become an IATA-accredited agency, led us to go the ITC route. Initially we had a stand-alone ticketing agreement with an agency David used to work



Lance and David van den Heever-Liebenberg

for. While this worked for a while, it became clear to us that not having the 'buying power' of a consortium was holding us back and we joined a consortium that fitted our needs at the time. While we had a great working relationship with this consortium, we knew we needed a model that was as bespoke as we were.

We met with Harvey World Travel (HWT) and were given an opportunity to 'stand on our soapbox' about the travel industry. Soon after, HWT proposed the development of an ITC model tailored to our business needs, which allowed us to retain our independence, gave us personalised support, a voice within the organisation and the opportunity to learn from some of the most incredible minds in the business.

David and I re-evaluate our business model on an annual basis. We have discovered a need for niche

market travel to southeast Asia and Indochina (LGBT, luxury and single female passengers). Our growth plan over the next 18 months includes luxury guided groups of no more than 16-20 passengers. We are currently working on new projects, including a training academy to share our business insights with other

agency owners.

To agents looking to go the independent route, I offer this advice: you must have the commitment and tenacity to keep on working no matter what; work regardless of whether you are in the office, on the beach or cruising down the Mekong. Be available to your clients 24/7, and

always have their best interests at heart – if you focus on their experience you will make money! No request is too small or too big, but you can say no – just be able to substantiate honestly the reasons why. Be accountable and take responsibility and sometimes no business is better than bad business!

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ITCs well placed to service small business

THE nature of ITCs and ITAs in South Africa – generally small businesses manned by one or two people – places them in a strong position to target other small businesses as clients, says **Robyn Christie**, South Africa's country manager for Travelport.



“Small businesses do have increasing access to online booking options, but their limited human resources leave them time poor.”
Robyn Christie

Local business analysts and commentators continually promote emerging entrepreneurship and small business as the way forward for the country's economic growth, and Robyn believes this sector should be a future focus for independents. Indeed, small businesses do have increasing access to online booking options, but Robyn points out that their limited human resources leave them time poor.

Bucket-list leisure

Another target, and one that many independents are already servicing with ingenuity, she says, are leisure travellers who want bespoke itineraries or bucket-list holidays and therefore seek specialist advice.

Beyond itinerary tailoring, she says, they appreciate the consultant who keeps in touch as they travel and checks to find out if they need any additional services as their journey progresses (with the advantages of upselling).

“Because it is their own business, and personalisation is so critical in today's world, independents are in a good position to offer such individualisation,” she comments.

Mobile and apps

The future operating landscape for independents will also see the growth of mobile applications, and Robyn notes the movement of travel consortiums toward app hosting, giving independents the opportunity to share in the mobile revolution.

Mladen Lukic of Travel Counsellors foresees Google's significant moves to enter the travel market in a big way, resulting in a future “cleaning up”.

The industry will split into two parts, he says. One part – transactional business – will be dominated by Google and other powerful search engines, at the expense of the traditional ‘High



Bucket-list travel is an opportunity for ITCs.

Street shop’.

The balance will fall to high-touch businesses that understand the intricacies of the customer journey. It will work across all platforms from social media through to human contact, will be strong on technology, will focus on the experience as opposed to the transaction, and will be equally alive in corporate and leisure environments.

“Everyone in between will morph into one of these, or disappear,” he says.

ITC/ITA consortiums believe there's a strong future for the independent retail sector. Says eTravel's **Garth Wolff**: “eTravel has shown growth for 18 years in a row, which is an indication that this model

still has lots of expansion opportunities.

With ever-changing technology as well as traffic congestion, people are becoming more efficient and being able to operate from anywhere, 24/7, this model is only going to continue to gain ground.”

Club Travel's **Jo Fraser** also draws positivity from the considerable growth of the sector in recent years. “If ITCs ensure that they offer an exceptional service, good prices and unique products, consumers will continue to book with them. Our technology offerings allow for all our partners to work smarter, not harder, and use all avenues to get the best airfares,” she says.

Future growth

Jo believes changing IATA regulations will further spur ITC/ITA growth. With these regulations becoming more financially binding, many larger agencies are giving up their licences and issuing through experienced ticketing departments, she says, as this decreases their monthly expenses with regard to BSP and ADMs.

Harvey World Travel also has great faith in the future of the ITC sector. Says **Monica Horn**: “We believe the future growth in travel will be a shift towards ITCs, as is already the case. It's for that reason that we are looking for select ITCs in the market that are keen to grow with us and continue developing the perfect ITC proposition.”



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Thinking of becoming an ITC? Travel Counsellors gives you more...

As interest in starting up an ITC business has grown over the years, so has the number of available options and variations to the model. Consequently, the decision of which partner to choose has become increasingly complex but this decision is crucial to the success and longevity of any new ITC venture.

For an aspiring ITC, choosing the right company can be a daunting process and more often than not the only factor considered is the commission split. The homeworking slice makes up a significant and ever growing part of the industry pie so many of the host companies are attracting potential ITC candidates on the basis of high commission splits. On face value, this seems like a no brainer. The higher the commission, the better the partner surely? Not necessarily. There are crucial questions that every potential ITC needs to consider when selecting a partner, and commission, whilst no doubt important, is just the tip of the iceberg when starting up a successful business:

Business Structure

Although it's not the sexiest of topics, it's vital to consider

questions like: Do I have to register a company or can I trade as a sole proprietor? Will I have to manage and pay both company tax and income tax? Will I have to register for VAT? It can be a mine-field and that's precisely why it's so important to choose a host company that can fully support ITCs in answering such questions, and provide the most tax efficient solutions. Making an uninformed choice may result in costs that quickly eat into the high commissions promised.

Commercial

Let's consider an option with higher commission split. On the surface this sounds like a very good deal, but delving deeper...what are the consequences of only relinquishing 15% or 20%? Something that is often overlooked are the hidden costs associated with this type of partnership. There might be an initial financial benefit to the ITC but what about IT costs, marketing costs, after hours ticketing, refunds, credit card charges costs, huge admin overheads? Are you protected from ADM's? Do you have to pay for your own web design and monthly hosting fees to keep your

website current and updated?

It quickly becomes clear that it's not just about issuing tickets – the host model should nurture the ITCs business in all areas – from admin to IT, from marketing and PR to customer relations. The relative merits of a service-only concept vs. a full support model need to be carefully weighed up.

And where does the other 15% or 20% go? Rather than re-investing that money back into making the ITC more successful, it may actually be used to strengthen current or future competitors. It may seem like a cheap option but if the partner you choose already has a business which is in direct competition with your new business – is it really wise to partner with them?

With this in mind, it is important for potential ITCs to consider whether they can truly trust the host company to do what is best for their business, or whether ultimately, the business model could lead to their demise.

Technology

Travel businesses are absolutely dependent on technology – it is an integral part of everything we do. As a result, it is imperative that the

best possible equipment and 24/7 IT support is available to ITCs. If this is not provided by the host company, it can end up being very costly and difficult to manage.

Technology doesn't only extend to the hardware and generic software used daily. Personalisation is a very hot topic and widely considered the future of travel. Technology plays a pivotal part of the growth in personalisation, with customer apps and predictive analysis revolutionising marketing to customers and dramatically improving user experience. All mainstream travel agencies are trying to keep up with this trend. Prospective ITC's should ask themselves: to be competitive how will I get access to this technology and at what cost? Will I still have the upper hand when the technology moves beyond my current knowledge and skill level? Who will provide the training to keep my business successful when this inevitably happens? These are important considerations when choosing a host company and ITCs need to be confident that they will receive the tools and training necessary to compete in

the digital economy.

Longevity

It's all well and good building up a thriving business with the host company, but are they in it for the long-haul? We've touched on the possible cannibalisation issue already, but another danger of the partner not re-investing in the ITC is that they're not provided with the technology and support necessary to future-proof the business as we move towards a market dominated by internet-based companies. It's essential that aspiring ITCs don't fall into the trap of just thinking about short-term gains when selecting a partner, but also how they plan to protect their business in the long-term.

Host companies offering high commission options tend to lack the essential support services alluded to here and often disregard the key questions that have been raised, deeming them unnecessary to running an ITC business. However, it is vital that every aspiring ITC finds the answers to these questions, enabling them to make an informed decision about the right partner for them.

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YOUR WORLD. BETTER

Your handy checklist to starting your own ITC business.

When starting up your own business there are many hidden requirements and costs that you will need to be aware of. Below is a handy cut out checklist which shows some of the more important requirements with average costs if you need to pay for them yourself versus what would they cost a Travel Counsellor. There is also a useful area for you to add any quoted prices that you receive so you can keep tabs on your potential costs.

| Requirements for your start-up | Average Cost | Travel Counsellors Cost | Notes |
|--|---|-------------------------|-------|
| Register Company purchase/registration/ name change, SARS registration, CIPS, VAT registration | R5K - R7.5K | FREE | |
| Website Register a domain, website design, hosting service | R12K - R25K | FREE | |
| Technology Purchase a PC, printer/fax/scanner, MS Office suite, antivirus, email hosting. Insure and maintain | R25K every 2-3 years, min R1.5K monthly on maintenance | FREE | |
| Marketing Design and produce stationery, brand advertising, electronic marketing, social media messaging, PR | From R25K annually | FREE | |
| Legal / Associations ASATA, BBBEE | R20K annually | FREE | |
| Commercial Airline/hotel/car/tour ops deals, international fares, global DMC, own unique product | Model specific | FREE | |
| Accounting / Financials Company bank account, merchant agreement, CC charges, bank charges, accountancy firm charges | CC Charges 3% Bank charges between 0.1% & 0.2% of turnover | FREE | |
| Trading / Production Ticketing charges, after hours charges, BSP refunds processing, ADM protection | Model specific | FREE | |
| Corporate Travel BBBEE, tax clearance, MIS reports, CC statements, lodge card | Model specific | FREE | |
| Business Development Continuous personal training, updates, new product, new technology | Model specific | FREE | |

ITCs & Homeworkers



Tech tools target ITCs

A COMMON misconception is that ITCs and homeworkers are not as 'professional' as traditional TMCs as a result of limited access to technology.

But, according to **Anita Parent**, ceo of Alchimea, much of the travel technology now available to ITCs is as state-of-the-art as the solutions provided by large TMCs.

For example, although designed as an enterprise mid-office application, Alchimea's technology suits any size business, even small ITCs. "We give home-based travel professionals

comprehensive software solutions to run their business, streamline operational efficiency, reduce cost and enhance revenue by increasing customer reach through our Travel Management Application (TMA)," says Anita.

Technology also plays a huge role in improved personalisation, and the TMA allows agents to keep detailed information about their customers' preferences and lifestyles.

"Host agencies using the TMA benefit tremendously from the consolidated reporting

and quality controls in the TMA. By automating the administration, quality checks and invoice processing of homeworker's transactions, they can ensure their brand reputation is upheld to the highest levels," she adds.

"What makes ITCs and homeworkers successful is the high quality of service they offer. This comes with building personal relationships with their corporates and leisure travellers. The TMA passenger and company profiles enable the home-based agent to

keep detailed information about their customers' preferences and lifestyles," says Anita, who adds that they can also keep up to date with feedback from their travellers with the built-in survey module.

A few of the other elements of the TMA include: electronic booking files with document archiving, online booking requests, importing of GDS bookings into the TMA for professional quotes with all fees automatically quoted, automatic invoicing, traveller tracking and electronic travel documents.



"What makes ITCs and homeworkers successful is the high quality of service they offer."
Anita Parent

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Travel Counsellors adds new app features

TRAVEL Counsellors myTC app has just launched a wide range of new features which aim to help clients and consultants better communicate when planning, organising and booking business and leisure trips.

The new features include an enquiries section to request and view travel quotes, travel imagery and videos to provide trip ideas and inspiration, the ability to request an appointment or booking directly with a Travel Counsellor and new functionality to



enable secure payments to be made through the app.

The myTC app was launched last year and is available for both iPhone and Android. It enables ITCs to personalise customers' booking information

with photos, names and trip notes for each part of the journey. Customers using the app have instant access to travel information, itineraries and travel documents. They can also contact their consultant at the touch of a button. ■

Births, deaths, marriages, promotions – we want to know! Please fax or e-mail TNW's Taryn Nightingale, at tarynn@nowmedia.co.za or (011) 327 4094.

Obituary

Mike Beachy Head, founder, co-shareholder and ceo of Caudwell Marine and Thunder City, has died. He was perhaps most famous for his collection of fighter jets. **John Caudwell**, co-shareholder of Caudwell Marine and Thunder City described him as a "loving father, husband and determined leader". "Mike was an extremely dear and loyal friend and a totally trusted business partner. Words cannot

express our sadness for the loss that we all feel as an organisation and we extend our deepest sympathy to Mike's family at this profoundly difficult time for them all. He was a genius innovator and a brilliant engineer, despite his lack of formal training, and spent the last ten years of his life utterly dedicated to



Mike Beachy Head

the success of Caudwell Marine." John said Mike was irreplaceable as a friend. He also said that he and the company were committed to ensuring the success of Caudwell Marine; not only for its employees, but also for Mike's family and friends, and even more, "for his legacy, for the loss of a great man".



Agents tour Nairobi and Tanzania

Kenya Airways, Tsogo Sun and Earthbound recently sent five agents and a Kenyan Airways consultant on a five-day educational through Kenya and Tanzania. The agents visited several hotels and attractions in Nairobi, Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar including the Hyatt Regency: The Kilimanjaro and The Southern Sun Dar es Salaam. "Our educational to Kenya and Tanzania was an amazing experience. We were treated like royalty and enjoyed every moment," says **Willie Welman**, senior wholesale consultant of Earthbound. "Thank you to Kenya Airways, Earthbound and TWF for making this possible," he adds. Pictured in front of the Nairobi National Museum are (from left), **Tsholofelo Mahlangu**, **Martonette Grobler**, **Aluwani Demana**, **Thabo Khwinana** of TWF and **Willie**.

Serendipity walks to health

Serendipity Tours took part in the East Coast Radio Big Walk on May 21. The team walked 10km as a team building exercise and to encourage a healthy lifestyle. "We finished in less than two hours," says **Kashmeera Hurbans**, ticketing agent of Serendipity Worldwide Group, "We had an awesome morning with great weather and fabulous team spirit." Pictured at the end of the race are: **Kashmeera** and **Suvika Deoduth** of SWG.



Delta and The Amy Foundation strengthen partnership

Delta Air Lines commits to giving one percent of its net profits to the communities it serves around the world. In Africa, they have partnered with The Amy Foundation to help advance education. To this end, Delta has

committed to providing after-school care and youth skills development for 900 students in underprivileged townships in the Western Cape. "Delta is committed to supporting education, skills and training in the

communities we serve and we are proud to help The Amy Foundation provide a brighter future for vulnerable young people," says **Jimmy Eichelgruen**, Delta's commercial director for Africa, the Middle East and India.

Pick of the week

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To the point



Sun International has handed over its Morula Casino and Hotel in Mabopane and the infrastructure to the North West Housing Corporation. The existing infrastructure comprises a three-star hotel with 73 furnished rooms including a presidential suite, the casino and a spa. The North West Housing Corporation has identified an operator to run the hotel. The negotiating process is still underway and therefore the new operator cannot be named yet.



Leave it to the pros!

Should people be allowed to sell travel without proper training?

- No
- Yes



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TNW7430

Cinema night at Vic Falls



Minor Hotels is offering a variety of additional experiences as part of its business conference offering at its Victoria Falls hotels. One of them is an outdoor cinema night. Other additional experiences agents can request include a Boma dinner, a sunset cruise on the Zambezi River and a half-day canoe experience. Pictured is **Ivana Naidoo**, regional marketing and communications manager – Africa. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Travel insurance – agents’ fees must fall

CANDICE MAY

TRAVEL agents are putting themselves and insurers at risk by charging service fees for booking travel insurance policies on behalf of clients without following correct procedure.

The Financial Services Board (FSB) stopped the practice of fees on booked policies four years ago when it removed the option of adding a service fee (of any amount) on a transaction on an insurer’s website. The reason was that agents earned up to 20% commission for booking policies.

However, if an agency currently wishes to charge such fees, known as Section 8(5) fees under the Short-Term Insurance Act, it must (a) provide explicit consent of the customer, (b) be a registered financial services provider (FSP) and (c) have the fee collected by the insurer.

Because agencies cannot sell travel insurance – they can provide a client with leads, but not make a decision for them – they cannot register with the FSB as insurance administrators. Therefore they must be placed on their

insurer’s – or its intermediary’s – FSP license to be considered a Juristic Representative administering policies on the insurer’s behalf. However, insurers will only agree to this if they feel the agency’s agents can provide “specialist knowledge,” for example, general risk management advice, and are worthy of charging fees.

While agents report they ensure they have a customer’s consent before charging fees for issuing policies, most admit they have no idea about the other requirements. As a result, they’ve been charging fees directly from the client ranging from “R50 if we haven’t done a booking”, to “R57 for domestic and R100 for international”, to “a minimum of R228”. **Louise Cockcroft**, head of travel insurance of Regent Insurance, warns that if the FSB finds out that an agent engaged in such behaviour, it can fine the agent and agency. Furthermore, if the FSB catches an insurer collecting a fee for an unregistered agency, it can fine the insurer.

According to **Jason Veitch**, head of travel insurance of TIC, agents are getting away

with issuing policies without following this procedure due to grey areas in the legislation.

Rachael Penaluna, business manager of Sure Maritime Travel, is one of the agents who felt that it was unfair not to be allowed to charge fees for issuing policies. “Issuing documentation and paying for a policy that will cover a customer’s journey is a full transaction and they are therefore compelled to pay for this service that we offer,” she said. **Debbie Joubert**, md of Sure Travel 24-7, says the only way an agency can survive is by charging fees.

Jason says the travel insurance community has been engaging with the FSB for years to clarify the grey areas in the legislation. But, because agents have been doing a superb job at distributing policies for three decades, there’s no sense of urgency.

That aside, Louise says legislative changes are on the way under a project called the Retail Distribution Review of Travel Products, in which the option of charging Section 8(5) fees will be removed completely – even for agencies that meet the current criteria for doing so. ■



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