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TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

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St Helena opens for business

DAVE MARSH

FOR over 500 years the only way to get to St Helena was by ship.

Yet this remote, extraordinarily scenic and historic tropical island in the Atlantic has been of such strategic importance that at one time a thousand ships would call there in a year when it played a key role in expanding Britain's global trade.

Last weekend that changed when Airlink started a weekly service using the new airport carved out of the side of the island by SA construction company, Basil Read.

Islanders watched from

the surrounding mountains and wept in the new airport building as the Airlink flight touched down and ushered in a new era.

Until now a five-day voyage on the *RMS St Helena* from Cape Town was the quickest way to visit the island and, as the ship carried on to Ascension Island, it was 18 days before one could be back in Cape Town.

Using one of its new Embraer E190 jets, Airlink's flight from Windhoek is under four hours. The aircraft starts the flight in Johannesburg and refuels in Windhoek, at the same time collecting passengers from a synchronised flight from Cape Town.

One of the first places where slavery was prohibited, St Helena became the naval centre for British efforts to wipe out slavery, rescuing some 25 000 slaves. After the Battle of Waterloo, Napoleon was imprisoned and died there. Some six thousand Boer prisoners of war were sent there and so too was Zulu King Dinuzulu kaCetshwayo, imprisoned for 10 years in 1890 for leading a rebellion against the British. Later, 25 Zulu chiefs were exiled to the island for resisting the British poll tax in Natal.

Rich in history and old world charm, the island offers a variety of activities on land and

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Undiscovered

Marketing and sales manager Karin Murray and the Airlink team are as pleased as punch with their new 190 E-Jet and its performance at the new airport. Flights onward to Ascension Island are next. Photo: Dave Marsh



Over one billion in turnover!

eTravel's annual gala dinner, A Royal Affair, celebrated 18 years since the consortium's inception in 1999 and a turnover of R1 019 479. Pictured here are (from left) eTravel's Tammy Hunt; ITC of the Year, Angela Blythe; Garth Wolff and Truda Louw. Photo: Kate Nathan

Int'l airlift out of Cape Town swells

LIESL VENTER

FROM October 27, 2018, Austrian Airlines will launch two weekly flights from Cape Town to Vienna, offering business class, premium economy and economy class.

From October 29 this year, Lufthansa will increase its direct Frankfurt-Cape Town service from three to five flights a week and from November 27, Edelweiss will

fly between Zurich and Cape Town three times a week.

"In addition to incoming tourists we have identified quite significant outbound business potential from Cape Town," said Lufthansa Group gm for Southern Africa, Dr André Schulz. "This is important, especially during the winter months when Cape Town is hit by seasonality." During this time, South

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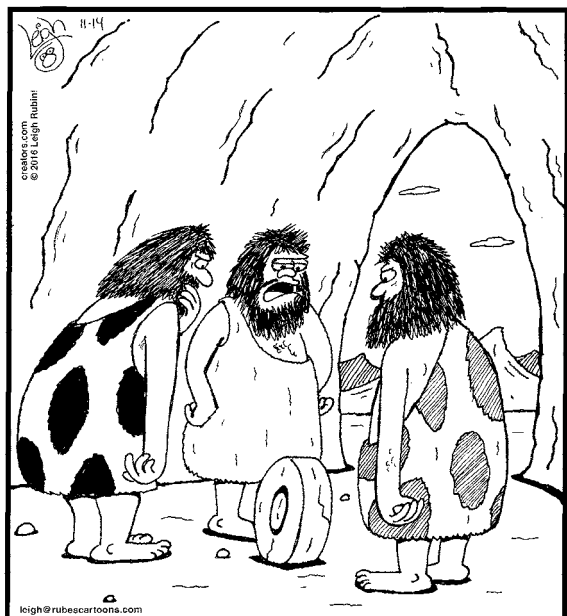
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Rubes® By Leigh Rubin



“Now the big question: How do we weaponize it?”

MSC bumps pax for corporates

TESSA REED

MSC Cruises has responded to an outcry from travel agents whose passengers were bumped from an upcoming cruise by dedicating a team to reaccommodate passengers.

Agents have had to scramble to re-accommodate clients after MSC Cruises bumped passengers off an April 9 departure to accommodate a themed cruise, booking out the entire vessel.

One of the affected agents, **Doriane Roque Riberia**, senior leisure consultant at Sure Travel Scene, says she had a group of 35 passengers affected by the booking. According to her,

only after she complained to management were her clients re-accommodated on the departure they requested. She says all 35 passengers were re-accommodated, most of them in the same class of cabins they had booked, although some had to be downgraded.

Fredah Morena, another consultant at Sure Travel Scene, is also affected by the cancellation. She explains that her booking is further complicated by the fact that her clients have booked flight tickets as part of the cruise. As a result, the clients will have to incur additional costs to change their flights.

Fredah says the clients are really unhappy about this.

MSC Cruises md, **Ross Volk**, explains that the

company caters for numerous themed cruises across the season together with various commercial partners. “In the instance of April 9, we were approached with a possible themed cruise and made a commercial decision thereon. We have dedicated a full team to direct passengers and trade to facilitate a free cruise move for either 17/18 or 18/19.”

According to Ross, trade was notified prior to any communication to passengers to ensure as little inconvenience as possible.

However, Doriane maintains that her clients were informed before her and that she was actually informed of the cancellation by her clients. ■

Fraudulent ‘travel agent’ arrested!

A FRAUDULENT travel agent in the Western Cape who ran an airline ticket discount scam valued at R500 000 has been arrested by the Hawks.

From December 2016 to September 2017, **Chandra Kumar Yadav** defrauded clients by telling them that he was able to purchase discounted airline tickets on their behalf, in exchange for cash payments. He allegedly used stolen credit card information to obtain the tickets at discounts of up to 60%. Some victims had their tickets cancelled before they could travel.

Following investigations,

a team from the Hawks conducted a search and seizure operation at Chandra’s residence in Gordons Bay, and electronic equipment, which included cellphones, SIM cards, and computers, was seized for analysis resulting in his recent arrest.

Chandra appeared in the Strand Magistrate’s Court on Wednesday, October 11, after he was arrested by the Western Cape Serious Commercial Crime Unit of the Hawks. He has been remanded in custody and his case was postponed to October 25. He is

facing charges of fraud, forgery, money laundering and contraventions of the Electronic Communications and Transactions Act.

If any of your clients have been affected by this scam, they are advised to contact the airlines so that the relevant links can be established, Captain **Lloyd Ramovah** told TNW.

“Victims can also contact the investigating officer, Captain **Trevor Bailey**.”

According to the Hawks, the airlines lost about R500 000 and some travellers also lost money after the airlines cancelled their tickets. ■

St Helena opens for business

From page 1

sea. Example: In warm tropical waters of up to 26 degrees in January to March, it is probable rather than possible for snorkellers to swim with whale sharks.

With the inauguration of a scheduled air service, the government of St Helena is very active in stimulating the development

of tourism.

The first fruits of the new infrastructure include the Mantis group opening a new hotel on a prime site in Jamestown.

Mantis founder, **Adrian Gardiner**, told TNW he had been in negotiations with St Helena authorities since the idea of the airport was originally

mooted ten years ago.

As a result, he was given first choice when the government identified a number of possible sites. The Mantis 30-room hotel increases the number of rooms on the island by over 50%.

Look out for TNW’s special feature on St Helena in a forthcoming issue. ■

Int’l airlift out of Cape Town swells

From page 1

Africa compensated for lower passenger numbers from Germany.

André said there was no reason why Austrian Airlines would not have the same experience, as Vienna offered

good connections into Europe.

Asked about the purchase of airberlin by the Lufthansa Group earlier this month, André said the airline would be incorporated into Eurowings, the group’s premium low-cost airline, accelerating the growth

of this airline significantly.

He said the group was currently looking at the possibility of assisting passengers left stranded with airberlin tickets after the airline stopped operations on October 15. ■

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32 Fricker Road, Illovo Boulevard,
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Audit Bureau of Circulations
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Founding Editors:

John H Marsh (1914-1996)

Leona Marsh (1923-2003)

EDITORIAL

Editor: Tessa Reed

tessar@nowmedia.co.za

Features Editor: Michelle Colman

michellec@nowmedia.co.za

Publisher: Anton Marsh

antonm@nowmedia.co.za

Deputy Publisher: Natasha Schmidt

natashas@nowmedia.co.za

Journalists:

Dorine Reinstein

Candice May

Sarah Robertson

Hilka Birns

Photographer:

Shannon Van Zyl

Production Editor:

Ann Braun

GROUP PUBLISHER

David Marsh

davem@nowmedia.co.za

SALES

Sales Director: Kate Nathan

katen@nowmedia.co.za

Ad Co-ordinator: Anthea Harris

antheah@nowmedia.co.za

PRODUCTION

Design Head:

Dirk Voorneveld

SUBSCRIPTIONS

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tvsubs@nowmedia.co.za

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Trafalgar hosted a tapas-style dinner at Escondido Tapas in Illovo to celebrate the launch of its new Europe and Britain packages. Pictured, from left, are **Divashni Reddi**, travel consultant of Pentravel The Glen; **Puleng Putu**, area sales manager of The Travel Corporation; and **Monique Rachman**, shop manager of Pentravel The Glen. Photo: Amanda Hardy

Trafalgar unveils new packages for 2018

CANDICE MAY

TRAFALGAR has unveiled new Europe and Britain packages for 2018 and redesigned its Europe & Britain brochure to provide more inspiration for clients and more detail for agents.

Briefing travel agents on the new itineraries earlier this month, **Theresa Szejwallo** said: "We've had an extremely successful 2017. In responding to their honest feedback, we pledge to make

2018 even more effortless, fun and successful for our partners with the tools we are equipping them with."

The Best of Norway package is a nine-day journey that takes travellers through wildlife and wilderness including Geirangerfjord; the Wonders of Italy package is an 11-day round-trip from Rome that takes in Florence, Lucca, Cinque Terre, Verona, Venice and Assisi; and the Great Iberian Cities package is a nine-day adventure that

features hotspots across Spain and Portugal.

The Madrid Explorer and Berlin Explorer are ideal for independent travellers who want to see something of a city pre or post a business trip.

Furthermore, Trafalgar has introduced #agentsfirst, a new strategy to help agents secure more sales. In line with this, the operator has launched a new agent site and a responsive web booking engine. ■

AirHeads

A snapshot of the week's airline news

Airberlin to stop flying this month

AIRBERLIN will stop flying on October 28 after declaring bankruptcy in August following years of losses and the decision of its biggest shareholder, Etihad, to cease financing. However, airberlin's subsidiaries, Niki and LG Walter, are solvent and flights will therefore continue. Airberlin is in talks with Lufthansa and easyJet about selling parts of its business.

KQ cancels Hong Kong and Hanoi services

KENYA Airways will cease flying to Hong Kong and Hanoi, Vietnam, from October 29. This will allow it to operate a daily flight to both Bangkok and Guangzhou, and allocate more seats across its African network.

Qatar launches flights to St Petersburg

QATAR Airways will launch a daily service between Doha and St Petersburg on December 19. An Airbus A320 will service the route with 12 flat-bed seats in business class and 120 seats in economy class. The airline has also signed an interline partnership with Vietjet Air, which will allow passengers to connect to points in Vietnam on Vietjet, using a single reservation across both airlines' networks.

New Kenyan domestic airline to take off

THE south coast tourist destination, Diani, is now served by new low-cost airline, Silver Stone Air. It operates from Wilson Airport in Nairobi and also flies to Kisumu on Lake Victoria. The carrier will deploy a 37-seat Dash 8-100 series aircraft and will also have at its disposal a 50-seat aircraft. Silver Stone Air flies twice daily to Kisumu and one flight a day to Ukunda (Diani).

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TNW attended the recent eTravel Forum at the Birchwood Hotel and OR Tambo Conference Centre in Johannesburg. Sarah Robertson reports.

eTravel ITCs retain more earnings

THIS year eTravel ITCs retained 80,68% of their earnings, a vast increase from the 55,9% retention offered in 2000. **Garth Wolff**, ceo of eTravel, stressed that the consortium now offered far more value through the continuous increase in percentage payouts for the group's ITCs.

The group is celebrating 18 years since its inception in 1999 and a turnover of just over R1 019 479 000 for 2017. This year's growth of 1,2% had been relatively small, with the majority of growth generated through the acquisition of new ITCs. Garth predicted that the group would continue to grow in 2018 with a further increase in ITC payouts expected. He expected the

consortium to reach the R1,2 billion turnover mark by 2020.

Garth said travel was very dependent on economic conditions and that the past few years had been tough for the industry as corporates scrutinised all expenses and questioned the service fees charged by TMCs. He added that companies were investigating technological enhancements such as mobile apps and online booking tools. "We must embrace technology together while also continuing to offer our clients personal service."

He added that the group had seen a dip in supplier override payments for the year. Payouts that had amounted to R16,1m in

2016 but had dipped to R11,4m in 2016. This drop was related to a decline in overrides from SAA from R8 million in 2015 to about R1 million for the current year.

Overall, Garth remained positive for the future, urging group members to take stock of how far they had come. "We must remain positive and ignore the negative environmental noise around us that threatens to overwhelm us. We must focus, never stop and never give up on our dreams."



▲ The princesses of the party – eTravel's **Avril-Leigh Shackleton** (left) and **Tammy Hunt**.

◀ **Wandile Sihlongonyane** (left) and **Royal Elzanberg**, of proudly Swazi ITC, Progressive Travel and Tours.



▲ Celebrating a great evening are eTravel ITCs (from left) **Kim Muller**, **Militza Spencer**, **Angela Doran** and **Jackie Wolmarans**. Photos: Kate Nathan



▲ **Travelport's Robyn Christie** (left) with **Beachcomber's Terry Munro**.



▲ **Gaynor van Loggenburg** (left) and **Lina da Costa** of Bidvest Car Rental.

Rand is a wild card for now

GARTH Wolff remained cautiously optimistic when he delivered his annual economic report at the recent eTravel Awards held in Johannesburg. He said international superpowers such as the US, the EU, China and India were only showing recovery from the 2009 recession now and that the growth experienced in these regions would soon filter down to South Africa's economy due to a renewed increase in demand for raw materials. Garth felt that oil's current trading rate of around \$55 a barrel was a fair price that would encourage stability in economies around the world.

Domestically, Garth outlined two possible outcomes for South Africa's economic future that hinged on the outcome of the ANC presidential election and the choice between the appointment of **Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma** and **Cyril Ramaphosa**. He predicted further lack of growth in the country, increased corruption followed by a slide in value of the rand and loss of support for the ANC should Zuma be

elected, while his prediction was for an instant change in sentiment towards South Africa followed by a slow rebuilding of the economy should Ramaphosa win the presidential battle.

However, the rand remained a wild card now more than ever before and Garth was unwilling to wager on its performance in 2018.

Macro-economically, Garth predicted that the wide mismanagement of state-owned enterprises would force a move towards self-privatisation in South Africa in the future. He predicted that SAA would curtail the extent of its losses by morphing into a smaller regional carrier. Gaps left by domestic flight cuts would be filled by existing private companies and new entrants to the market.

He also highlighted the threat of a water crisis, with Rand Water currently unable to keep up with demand, particularly in Cape Town where the population had almost doubled in the last 20 years. The city has just awarded a desalination plant project to a private company, the first of many contracts expected to be awarded to combat the crisis. ■

Colombia introduces visas for South Africans

FROM October 4, South Africans travelling to Colombia are now required to carry a visa.

All applications for visas must be completed and submitted online. Processing time is between five and 10 working days upon receipt of a completed visa application and its corresponding processing fee deposit. It is therefore

advisable for travellers to start the application process well in advance of the date of departure.

Once the application has been made, the applicant must forward the confirmation received from 'Tramites Cancilleria' to the Consular Section at the Embassy of Colombia in Pretoria via email. The Consular Section will

then respond to the email, with further information on how to go about paying the corresponding processing fees.

The Consulate section at the Embassy of Colombia in Pretoria reserves the right to call upon applicants for a personal interview. If such is the case, the applicant must bring along his/her valid passport. ■

Silversea Cruises announces new ship

SILVERSEA Cruises and Fincantieri have signed a contract worth €310m (R5bn) for the construction of a new ship, due to join the Silversea fleet in 2020.

The new ship, tentatively named *Silver Moon*, will be sister ship to *Silver Muse* and will expand Silversea's fleet to 10

ships. *Silver Moon* will be able to accommodate 596 passengers and will be built in conjunction with a Green Star 3 Design.

The cruise line has also unveiled 160 voyages for summer 2019, which are open for bookings. The collection includes *Silver Cloud's* early 2020 Expeditions to Antarctica.

Silversea has also added new destinations – Milos, Greece; L'Ile Rousse and St Florent in Corsica; Porto Santo Stefano, Italy; St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, UK; Rudyerd Bay, Misty Fjords, Alaska; Alert Bay, Cormorant Island, British Columbia; and Little Bay, Montserrat. ■



The Michelangelo turns 21

Legacy Hotels and Resorts' The Michelangelo in Sandton, recently celebrated its 21st birthday. Pictured here with the hotel's famous crème brûlée are Hara Jackson, group sales manager, Legacy Hotels and Resorts and the Michelangelo's senior sous chef, Freddie Tshikuvhe, who have both been with the hotel since its inception. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

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ADMs: How do you avoid them and what are your rights?

Savannah Freemantle and Sarah Robertson find out how agents can avoid and dispute ADMs and what their rights are when it comes to deductions.

WHILE ADMs are a hot topic among agents, a recent poll on eTNW showed that 90% of agents have not read Iata's ADM handbook.

Natalie van der Merwe, central ticketing services manager at Pentravel, says while reading Iata's ADM handbook can assist to an extent, agent-airline communication is imperative. "It's a tedious read and it can also be ambiguous. We try to have a good relationship with each airline so that we can clear up this ambiguity."

She adds that one of the biggest ADM challenges is when airlines make changes to their rules and regulations and fail to communicate them

to the industry. "More communication is needed from the airlines so that we have the opportunity to comply and better avoid ADMs."

It is recommended that you initiate and maintain a solid line of communication with the airlines. While it can be challenging to establish, the value cannot be overemphasised. Here you can query ambiguities and check in regarding possible updates that have not yet been released on BSP-Link, or the GDS.

If you have received an erroneous ADM, BSP-Link is the first port of call. **Nicolene Van Blerk**, BSP team leader at Club Travel, explains the process of dispute: "You have 15

days to dispute the ADM through BSP-Link. If you do not dispute it within 15 days, the status of the ADM changes to billed. If you miss the 15-day period

"The most proactive approach is to have a staff member check BSP-Link daily to find out whether or not an ADM has been received."

you will need to contact the airline directly. In order to dispute an ADM, gather all the evidence and upload it to BSP-Link. After the 15-day period has expired, you will be notified as to whether or

not your dispute has been successful. If successful an ACM (agency credit memo) will be issued."

To ensure that you catch an ADM within the 15-day grace period, look out for Iata notifications. "When an ADM is issued Iata does send a general notification that there is something awaiting your attention on BSP-Link," says Nicolene. "We find that the most proactive approach is to have a staff member check BSP-Link daily to find out whether or not an ADM has been received, this way you will never miss the 15-day grace period."

If you receive an ADM where you were negligent, it is important that your agency enters into

discussions with you regarding the manner of repayment.

In South Africa, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, section 43 states: "Deductions off an employee's basic salary for damage or loss caused by the worker may only be made if the employer has followed a fair procedure and given the worker a chance to show why the deduction should not be made, if the worker agrees to the deduction in writing and if the total deduction is not more than 25% of the worker's nett pay."

You have the right to query any process that doesn't comply with this Act and ensure that your agency is complying with fair labour practice. ■

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Payment Solutions

Virtual cards have changed the face of travel payments, writes Max Marx.

The VC revolution

VIRTUAL cards (VCs), also known as Virtual Card Numbers (VCNs) and Virtual Account Numbers (VANs) are revolutionising travel payments for travel agents and their corporate clients in South Africa.

The use of the VC in the South African travel space has seen a significant reduction in fraud as a result of its salient features – a virtually produced credit card with a VAN that is generated at the time of payment or booking guarantee that can only be used for a single transaction. The amount, supplier to be paid and date range the VAN is valid for are all stipulated by the purchaser.

Lidia Folli, BidTravel ceo, says the major benefit of a VC is that it offers a secure way of paying. “The biggest risk we run as travel agents when it comes to payments is fraud when settling on behalf of clients. Almost every travel business has been exposed to it in some form or another. Virtual cards eliminate fraud because one issues a single fixed value VC for every transaction or a batch of transactions.”

Marthie Moore, BCD Travel cfo, explains that the amount on the card is matched to the invoice, so if an agent stipulates a payment of R1 000 for the VAN, the supplier can only ‘swipe’ for R1 000. The supplier cannot charge R999 or R1 001. “It puts the control in the hands of the buyer.”

VCs not only allow travel agents to define a spend limit, says **Dan Greaves** of Amadeus’s Travel Payments



Anthony Hynes

Business Unit, but also the expiry date for each card, which significantly limits the fraudulent risk of the card. If a supplier does not ‘swipe’ the VC within the stipulated time period, the money is returned to the buyer’s account.

eNett VANs, which are widely used by travel agents in South Africa, have been designed to maximise protection against supplier default, says **Anthony Hynes**, ceo of eNett International, in which Travelport is a major shareholder. “As well as generating unique MasterCard numbers for each transaction, agents can include payment parameters such as amount, currency, date and merchant, making it a more secure way to pay and be paid. eNett VANs are also backed by the MasterCard guarantee, giving additional peace of mind when dealing with new suppliers.”

VCs also offer additional benefits over other forms of payment. “The fact that payments are cleared immediately is a huge opportunity for travel agents as it creates operational

efficiencies and enables us to provide better service to our clients,” says Lidia. “They are quicker to issue and release for processing, with no time limitations as one has in traditional banking.

“With VCs, the supplier is in control of settlement, which means they don’t have to wait for proof of payment and for an EFT to clear before actioning a booking. VCs also reduce operational costs, for example, in instances where we can replace costly cross-border telegraphic transfers with a VC card payment.”

According to **Kevin Lomax**, Diners Club SA head of Corporate Card, VCs are also a better cash management tool for travel agents. “In the case of the Diners Club Virtual Card, which is linked to our corporate clients’ credit facility, the extended repayment period means no cash outflows for agents or delays in the cash conversion cycle.”

Marthie adds that VCs are also useful for dealing with currency fluctuations. “We use eNett as our VANS supplier. Built into their VCs is a tolerance level that one can add on to a specific payment that takes care of currency fluctuations. If, for example, we add a 5% tolerance level to a US\$1 000 payment for a hotel booking in the US, the VAN will take into consideration movements in the rand between the time payment is made and the time the supplier ‘swipes’ the card, and we will then be able to charge the client the correct rand value for the US\$1 000 at the exact time the supplier ‘swipes’ the card.”



More product choice

THE growth of eNett’s global business is a good indication of the increasing use of VANS in the travel industry.

According to Travelport, eNett’s revenue grew from US\$2m (R27,3m) in 2011 to US\$150m (R2bn) in 2016 and expectations are that between 2016 and 2020, the business will see compound annual growth of more than 25%.

According to **Robyn Christie**, Travelport South Africa country manager, there has been fantastic take-up and growth of its eNett business, making excellent progress with both existing customers and new business.

eNett VANS integrate seamlessly with Travelport’s Travel Commerce Platform, and have also been integrated into the Sabre and Amadeus GDS platforms.

Agents must have funds in the eNett account, for a pre-paid solution, before they can generate a VAN – an automatically generated 16-digit MasterCard number used to pay their suppliers.

The Diners Club Virtual Card was launched in 2015 and became available for use by Diners Club corporate cardholders in 2016, when its development was complete. It is available to all companies that have corporate agreements with Diners Club and is linked to the corporate’s credit

facility. That means agents generate a VC as a ‘subset’ of clients’ corporate lodge cards. Only suppliers that are Diners Club merchants can accept payments. The Diners Club Virtual Card will be integrated into GDSs in 2018.

ABSA launched its VC solution, Virtual Pay, in the SA market in April. It offers all the benefits and guarantees of a MasterCard product. To use Virtual Pay, TMCs or their clients open a Virtual Pay account with ABSA. TMCs and ABSA clients can either choose a pre-paid option or have a credit facility on the account. No fees are charged by the bank for raising a VC.

ABSA’s Virtual Pay Business Travel (VPBT) solution is fully integrated into GDSs through global travel integrator Conferma, while Virtual Pay commercial payments can integrate into a client or TMC’s Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system.

The VPBT solution enables suppliers to upload their invoices into an invoice repository within the reporting tool, which agents can then access.

Virtual Pay is currently fully integrated with Sabre which means agents can use the ABSA VC for airline, hotel, car-rental and rail bookings within Sabre. Payments through Travelport and Amadeus are currently limited to hotel payments.



Conferma drives VCs in SA

TRAVELPORT, Amadeus and Sabre have all signed agreements with Conferma, the global payments and reconciliation technology company that specialises in the settlement and reconciliation of corporate travel expenses.

Conferma offers GDS and non-GDS solutions that enable corporates and travel agents to generate VANs through their online booking tools and, in the case of agents, through GDSs as well.

Besides ABSA, Conferma

also has partnerships with Citibank, payment solutions provider Wex and eNett. When an agent requests a VAN, Conferma 'pulls' the VAN from the merchant, in this case MasterCard, and delivers it to the TMC and GDS.

Amadeus plans to launch its own virtual card solution for South Africa

THE introduction of a virtual card solution in the South African market is a top priority for Amadeus in the months to come, says **Andy Hedley**, Amadeus South Africa gm.

"Virtual cards are an excellent way to combat fraud, as well as reducing the time spent on reconciliation. They are widely used around the world and will definitely be

a winning solution for travel agents in our market," he says. Amadeus offers a host of virtual card solutions in a variety of markets globally that are fully integrated with the Amadeus GDS.

Pros and cons

DINERS Club's **Kevin Lomax** says a significant benefit of using virtual cards (VCs) is that there is no sharing of card details that could be reused fraudulently. He adds that VCs can reduce operating costs of TMCs. "If a TMC is paying a supplier using their own cash and collecting later from the corporate, they have a cost of capital that is removed when using a VC."

Scholtz Fourie, cfo of Tourvest Travel Services (TTS) says no client information is displayed on the card. "No traveller details appear on the card, only the amount of the transaction, card number, CVV and expiry date in order to process payment."

Another advantage of using VCs is that they provide automatic reconciliation of purchases and payments, removing the tedious and time-consuming task of having to reconcile bookings against invoices and payments.

Although VCs such as eNett offer agents rebates on payments, one disadvantage of using prepaid VC solutions is that travel agents have to preload funds into their VC accounts held by the VC provider before they can generate a VAN, says XL Travel ceo, **Marco Ciocchetti**. "So although these cards are great for reducing fraud and providing greater protection to customers, some agencies may find it difficult

to constantly preload money into their VC accounts and may prefer the option of credit facilities offered by 'plastic' credit cards, or to use a VC supplier that links its VC to credit facilities."

Themba Mthombeni, ceo of Duma Travel, says the main reasons for using VCs are for security and to monitor expenses. "We prefer to use only one VAN supplier so that it's easier to reconcile expenses and to top up funds on one card. With normal credit cards, reconciliation can sometimes be a nightmare, especially when suppliers have a different registered company name to the one they use as a trading name."

The downside of using a pre-paid VC, says Themba, is that agencies constantly have to check that there are sufficient funds in their eNett accounts to make payments and have to monitor their expenses daily. "Some suppliers also don't accept eNett payments."

There are also suppliers that add extra charges for paying with certain types of payment cards, says Amadeus's **Dan Greaves**. "Travel agencies should therefore look for a supplier that can offer a range of different payment options. That way they will be able to pay those suppliers who charge extra for certain cards with a type of card that doesn't attract the additional charge."

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Innovation puts Standard Bank, Diners Club out front

Bitcoin, Ethereum, wearable payments tech – there is payment wizardry all around us, with people increasingly adopting new payment technologies and innovation. Standard Bank and Diners Club have launched new technologies that are already disrupting the way consumers, companies and TMCs can buy foreign exchange, make international money transfers, pay for e-commerce transactions online, and settle suppliers.

← Shyft

Shyft is an award-winning, innovative app that allows consumers to purchase foreign currency using their annual R1 million Single Discretionary Allowance (SDA).

They can also make international cross-border payments, buy a travel card and make a purchase online using virtual cards (VCs) with MasterCard-generated credit card numbers. Shyft removes the need to buy foreign exchange at a bureau de change outlet where travel documents have to be produced before a purchase.

“The Shyft app offers consumers some of the lowest forex rates available in the market.”

“The Shyft app offers consumers some of the lowest forex rates available in the market.”

Shyft had already won an EFMA Accenture Innovation Award for Most Disruptive Innovation in December 2016 before it was introduced into the market by Standard Bank in February 2017.

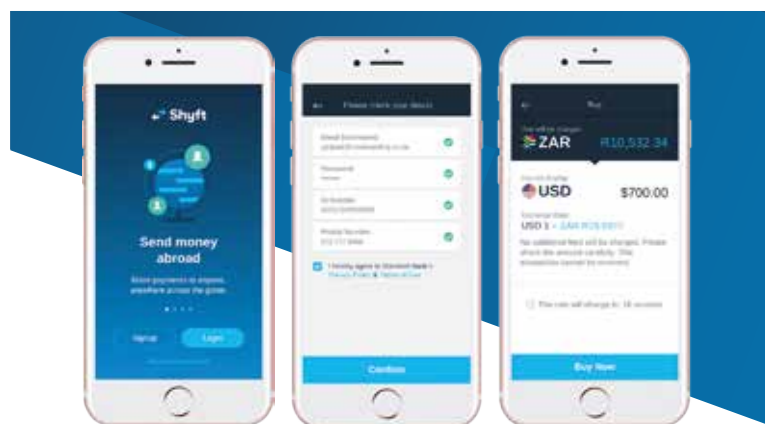
In October this year Shyft was a finalist in the MTN App of the Year Awards and went on to win The Best Financial App Category and the overall MTN App of the Year Award.

To use the app, consumers must open a Standard Bank account,

which can be opened directly from the app, although they don't necessarily have to fund the app through a Standard Bank account. Within the app customers can order forex in USD, GBP, EUR and AUD, which is kept in their in-app digital wallet indefinitely. They may also order a multi-currency Shyft travel card, which can be used for in-store purchases abroad and to draw cash in foreign currency. Users can transfer funds from the digital wallet to the Shyft Card and, on return from their travels, transfer it back to their digital wallet where they can keep it for their next trip. They can also transfer funds abroad to anywhere or anyone they wish to.

Arno von Helden, Standard Bank Head of Forex Solutions/ CIB Global Markets, says the Shyft app offers consumers some of the lowest forex rates available in the market, and that forex buyers can choose when they want to buy the forex, which can lead to great savings.

There are no fees incurred when transacting with the in-app virtual cards or when making in-store purchases with the Shyft travel card. Users also have access to live chat and call-back facilities for when they need assistance. Shyft already has 10 000 registered users. To learn more about and download the app go to www.getshyft.co.za



Diners Club Virtual Card

The second innovation is Diners Club Virtual Card (DVC). Although virtual cards (VCs) are not new to travel, they have still not replaced billbacks and EFTs.

Kevin Lomax, Diners Club SA Head of Corporate Card, says to use VCs to their full potential in travel, card providers, TMCs, corporates and service providers will have to make joint decisions on which transaction they want to 'VC' and how this will be implemented.

Kevin says there are several advantages to settling payments using VCs instead of using EFTs, especially in the case of bulk settlement. "Where TMCs settle suppliers via EFT and then pay themselves by swiping a corporate lodge card, they still carry the transaction costs. If TMCs instead raise a DVC that is linked to the

customer's lodge card and issue this to the end supplier, these costs are transferred to the supplier, whose business is geared to absorbing these costs."

Kevin sees VCs playing a role in the settlement of billbacks, once the TMC has received the invoices and done the reconciliation. "The TMC would then generate a VC from the company lodge card and send the VC details to the supplier with a remittance report. The supplier is settled immediately once the VC is redeemed."

VCs can also be fully integrated into a GDS or online booking tool workflow. In this instance, the travel booker simply issues a virtual card to a supplier on confirmation of a booking, and payment is immediate.



Why use the Diners Club Virtual Card?

- Diners Club has more lodge cards in place at corporates than any other card issuer. This is an opportunity for TMCs to issue more VCs directly off a customer's credit facility rather than using their own credit facility. No prefunding of the DVC is necessary.
- DVC has been designed to fit into the billback workflow. Agents can generate a VC as a 'subset' of their client's corporate lodge card.
- When a TMC makes payment with the DVC, suppliers cannot redeem payment until they have uploaded supporting documentation such as invoices. This is very helpful to TMCs who need these documents for reconciliation and governance purposes.
- When using the DVC, cardholders can still earn reward points.
- The DVC follows the same security protocols that are built into all Diners Club cards.
- All transactions can be viewed on Diners Club Advantage, making reconciliation easy.
- The DVC allows for the input of third-level data, enabling TMCs to add traveller information into the underlying transaction, adding rich data for reconciliation purposes.

Will VCs replace billbacks?

VIRTUAL Cards (VCs) theoretically have the ability to end the hotel billback system in South Africa, but this will depend on how much the travel agency community wants to get rid of them.

Lidia Folli of BidTravel, says VCs provide agencies with a different way

of settling billbacks. "It does make the billback process more efficient, because you're issuing a once-off virtual card for every transaction and dealing with any discrepancies upfront, but it doesn't replace billbacks. We will continue to handle billbacks as a service to our clients where they want us to deal with the administration that comes with hotel or any other service bookings."

Aldo Laubscher, ABSA's head of Commercial Payments, Retail & Business Banking: Barclays Africa Group Limited/ABSA, says



Kevin Lomax

travel agents are eager to be rid of billbacks as this can reduce their administrative staff needs, improve cost control and reduce risk. "However, some TMCs are reluctant to do so as this may affect the income generated from doing billbacks for corporate clients."

He believes elimination of the billback is possible, depending on how an agency, its client and the supplier structure their use of VCs.

Kevin Lomax of Diners Club, believes VCs will, in the short term, change the settlement method after the billback process is complete, but in the longer term they have the potential to replace billbacks if the VC is sent to the supplier at the time of booking. He says for efficient and effective use of VCs, a change management process is needed.

"This is where the card company, the TMC and hotel must work together to ensure a smooth transition to VCs and their successful implementation."

Ways in which travel agents can use VCs to pay hotel bills:

- Provide a hotel supplier with a VAN for payment of the costs the company accepts as part of the traveller's stay. The corporate traveller pays for any extras and claims the costs back from the company.
- Guarantee the payment in the GDS with a VC, then send the VAN to the supplier, who 'swipes' the VC when the corporate checks out.
- Use a VC to guarantee a booking in the GDS, but then the client pays the hotel with their own or company credit card on checkout.
- Raise a booking within the GDS, provide your own voucher as guarantee, await an invoice from the hotel once the client has checked out, and then raise a VAN to make payment. This way does not eliminate billbacks.

Travelex launches ordering site for corporates

FOREIGN exchange service provider, Travelex, has launched a new ordering website for its accredited corporate customers. The website enables corporates to place orders online and track progress from placement, to approval to delivery.

Travelex retail manager, **Jacques Labuschagne**, says the new website puts corporates in control of the ordering process. "They can decide on who can process and release an order, assign different levels of authority for sign-off at every step, appoint approval rights to individuals or TMCs who can help track and manage their spend, and the platform also allows them to view a variety of reports that will keep them informed of their daily, weekly or monthly forex spend."

Among the many advantages is the absence of manual completion of forms, as everything is done online. Once a customer's information has

been securely uploaded, all the information is pre-populated with every transaction. Only airline tickets will need to be uploaded with each new transaction.

The delivery facility is open to all Fica-registered corporate travellers and travel managers who have an account with Travelex. It is not available to leisure travellers.

"Convenience was the key when designing the system," says Jacques. "Orders can be approved on the move from any smart device. There is no need to call or follow up after placing an order as the platform provides access to real-time tracking information on the online dashboard, giving updates on the progress of each order."

Besides purchasing foreign currency, travellers can also use the online platform to sell unused currency back to Travelex, and order and load funds on to a cash passport. ■



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Adventure Tourism

The Naked Agent

The purpose of the Naked Agent is to assess the experience from only a sales skills perspective and not the effectiveness of the travel agency.

Go the extra mile!

SCENARIO: A scuba diving holiday for two – both qualified open-water divers. Three- or

four-star accommodation for a week within the first two weeks of November with a budget

of R25 000pps, including the dives. All three agencies were contacted via email.

Corrie du Preez, Sure Glenwood Travel

WINNER

Within a few moments of receiving my email, the md of the agency replied, introducing the consultant who would be handling my request and also suggested Malaysia, Indonesia and Egypt as potential diving destinations. A few moments later, **Corrie du Preez** called to advise that she was looking into my request and mentioned that she had a great tour operator that she worked



Corrie du Preez

with for diving trips. The next day she sent through a very comprehensive quotation for Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, and it was evident she had spent a significant amount of time tailoring a package that suited

my needs. She advised that her contact had said it would be cheaper to book diving on arrival and included a detailed rate sheet with a wide selection of dive options. The package was well within budget even when factoring

in the dive costs. She then followed up with a further quotation with another seven options in Egypt and Thailand – ranging from under budget to just over. I was also impressed that she followed up her emails with a phone call to check if I had any further comments on questions. Another impressive aspect was the very detailed fact sheets she sent through for Thailand and Egypt which included add-on excursions – a great way to upsell with some optional extras.



Club Travel, Ontdekkers

The day after I submitted the query, I received an email from the consultant to advise that she was working on the request. A day later, she called to ask me a few questions and it was immediately evident that she had spent a significant amount of time researching options. She was the only consultant to ask about my diving skill ability and also wanted to find out whether I

would prefer to spend most of the trip diving, or was I less serious and keen to include other activities in my trip. She also put a big focus on finding a destination where the weather conditions were likely to be optimal. The consultant also advised that it was likely to be much cheaper to book diving upon arrival and that it would also mean that our money would not be non-refundable if the

weather wasn't great. She also spoke to contacts to get a rough estimate of the cost of a dive along with equipment hire. While this agent was the most thorough in terms of her research, the quotation came in quite significantly over budget, excluding diving, but other than that, her service was exceptional.



Pentravel, Mall of Africa

The consultant was quick off the mark and replied within an hour of receiving my query with an introductory email. Soon afterwards, keeping the tone light and casual, she suggested I take a look at scuba diving in Alexandria, Egypt, and Cancun, Mexico – which were definitely 'out of the box' destinations. The same afternoon, she phoned to advise that she had found something in Maldives, but that it was slightly over budget. Before sending the quotation, she sent a fact sheet

for Makunudu Island in Maldives, which was a great tactic for getting me excited about the trip – especially as the resort has an on-site PADI dive centre. The next day, she sent through a detailed quotation with two options for both Maldives and Cancun. The consultant was enthusiastic and quick to respond – the only negative was that all four quotations were over budget and excluded the cost of diving as initially requested in the enquiry.



Corrie's tips for adventure travel

- Use reputable suppliers (in this case, we used Azure Travel and ITT).
- Ensure that the travel insurance covers adventure or sport travel.
- Manage expectations – get to know your client, their age and fitness level.
- Do your research, and provide as much information as possible.

Did you know?

On Air Austral, paragliders, golf bags and diving bags are all permitted free of charge for the first 20kg, with excess baggage rates applying thereafter. This is over and above the 25kg allocation for economy-class passengers. All other sports equipment can be included in the baggage allowance, including bicycles, surfboards with a maximum fee of €20 (R315). Excess baggage can be purchased up to 24 hours prior to departure and a discount of 30% applies.

Book it!

Travel Vision is offering a six-night Galapagos land and sea package with rates from R52 690pps. The package includes return flights and taxes (ex-JNB), two nights' accommodation in a hotel and four nights' accommodation aboard the *Estrella del Mar* in a twin-share cabin, daily breakfast and specific other meals, as well as all transport between destinations. It also includes snorkelling at Isla Lobos, Kicker Rock, Gerdner Bay and Corona del Diablo. Valid from November 26-December 10 (Sunday departures).

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Adventure Tourism

Adventure travel can be risky business, which is why agents should familiarise themselves with travel insurance policy exclusions. Sue van Winsen reports.

Specific insurance for adventurous clients

AGENTS should ask clients the relevant questions to ascertain just how adventurous they plan to get on their trips and ensure that clients are covered in the event of an unfortunate accident.

According to both TIC and Bryte Insurance Company, normal or low-risk leisure sporting activities such as cycling and scuba diving would be covered by most benefit options.

Simmy Micheli, sales and marketing manager of TIC, says: "A regular travel policy will cover regular low-risk activity, including cover for any leisure sporting activity such as skiing and underwater diving, provided the diver holds a valid open-water certificate or is diving with a qualified instructor."

Extreme adventure
She says the distinction

comes in when the client is taking part in professional sport, competitive events or hazardous activities.

If this is the case, then the insurer should be approached for specific cover and the client must be prepared to pay a higher rate for this.

TIC recommends that clients looking to take part in out-of-the-ordinary adventure-based activities should apply individually, and the company

will then assess the activities to determine the risk and premium.

Anriëth Symon, head of travel at Bryte Insurance Company South Africa, agrees.

She explains that there is a distinction between normal leisure sporting activities and more extreme sports.

"We provide information on the sporting and adventure activities we cover as well as activities that are excluded

from cover."

Bryte Insurance has gone to great lengths to compile a list of such activities, which is included in its policy wording.

"Should an activity not appear on our list, it does not necessarily mean that we will not provide cover.

"We encourage clients to contact us if they will be participating in an activity that is not listed in our policy wording," says Anriëth.

Case study: Medical emergency at Everest Base Camp

Mariska South travelled to Everest Base Camp in Nepal where she suffered a High Altitude Cerebral Edema (HACE). Fortunately, she had taken out a TIC Comprehensive Policy with a Sports Extension for mountaineering.

"I developed a severe headache over my left eye. I took painkillers and lay down for a while. When I woke up, I was disorientated, the pain was severe and it had moved to the back of my head. Our South African tour leader and Sherpas established that I

had suffered an HACE. The only option was to airlift me to a lower altitude as soon as possible," says Mariska.

Fortunately, Mariska was moved to the closest hospital, but it was very basic. TIC was contacted and a helicopter was

arranged to move her to a better equipped hospital in Kathmandu.

Mariska's travel agent, **Megan Fineberg** from Constantiaberg Travel, urged Mariska to take additional cover. "I think it was five days into the trip that I received

the most awful Whatsapp message about Mariska. I made a call to the TIC call centre and they were so on the ball. As soon as they received a 'fit to fly' certificate I was notified and Mariska was homeward bound." ■

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City Bowl blitz

Beachcomber put together a blitz to promote its new Adults Only wing (Victoria for Two) at Victoria Beachcomber Resort & Spa in Mauritius. The team handed out flyers and Twix chocolates at Pentravel City Bowl. Pictured, from left (back): Nadia Arnold and Nicolene Scheepers (front) Stefan Horner, Shelley Daniels and Lara Steyn.



Industry gives back

Thompsons Holidays hosted its second annual golf day at the Randpark Golf Club on the Firethorn Course on October 12. The day raised R68 000 for charity. Pictured, from left are Angela Wood, Philippa Matshoe and Deline Venter, from Thompsons Holidays.

Appointments

■ **Nicolas Craninx** is InterContinental Hotels Group's director of hotel performance support in Africa. Nicolas will lead performance and operations of 17 IHG hotels across the region and will be based in IHG's Johannesburg offices. He began his career in South Africa in 1992 at Protea Hotels. Recently, in England, he led Crowne Plaza Harrogate's conversion from a Holiday Inn to Crowne Plaza.

■ **Nicole Liang** has been appointed to the newly created position of vp Asia-Pacific, Wings Travel Management. She brings

27 years' corporate travel experience in the Asia-Pacific market to Wings, with specific strengths in the energy and marine sectors. For the last four years she was director of operations SEA at FCM Travel Solutions, where she founded the TMC's marine and energy brand. Her career has also included operational roles at Corporate Travel Singapore, CWT Singapore and Instone International.

■ **Megan Taplin** has been appointed new area manager for the Knysna section of the Garden Route National Park. Megan has worked for South African

National Parks since 2001.

■ **Asata** has appointed **Monique Diez** to drive its Asata Professional Programme and related projects that include the Asata Awards and Young Professionals in Travel. An experienced training and development expert, Monique has worked with TMCs, corporates and travel technology providers and, in her capacity as the owner of MD Dynamics, has consulted to various travel organisations.



Pick of the week

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Cruise Consultant – Gauteng

Flight Centre Travel Group
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Senior Sales Consultant – Cape Town

Lee Botti & Associates
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Reservations Consultant – Junior/Intermediate – JNB North

Equity Connections cc
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Executive Assistant – Sandton

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To the point

The 186-bedroom LUX* Grand Gaube will reopen at the end of the year after undergoing a \$32 million (R437m) renovation. The resort has ten onsite restaurants and bars, and Mont Choisy 18-hole golf course. The property is also launching a wellness centre with a spa, gym and onsite life coach.



Local is not always lekker

What are the obstacles to selling domestic tourism?

- It is often more expensive than overseas travel
- It is simply not lucrative
- There is not a lot of interest from clients
- I do not have enough knowledge on the products available

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Immerse yourself in Asia!

Wendy Wu is introducing 'Immerse Yourself Group Tours' next year, offering guests the opportunity to experience untouched Asia through cultural experiences. Examples of sightseeing on these tours include spending a night in a monastery on sacred Koya-san, trekking along a remote section of the Great Wall, and riding a bicycle between Yangshuo's sentinel limestone karsts. Pictured here are (from left): **Rene Swart**, tour consultant; **Bianca Morais**, sales representative and, **Alet Steyn**, gm; of Wendy Wu Tours. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Bid to improve ADM dispute process

SARAH ROBERTSON

ASATA will be seeking a more fair process for ADM disputes when it attends the Passenger Agency Conference (PaConf), which focuses on relationships between airlines and recognised passenger sales agents, in November.

Ceo of Asata, **Otto de Vries**, is the current chair of the World Travel Agents Associations Alliance (WTAAA) – the organisation of which Asata forms a part – which, together with the European Travel Agents' and Tour Operators' Associations, has proposed revised wording for IATA resolution 818g Section 1.10 which relates to ADM disputes.

The proposed revisions will incorporate wording that was previously in place, which allowed the travel agent to refer disputes to the Travel Agency Commissioner for assistance within 30 days of notification of an ADM.

Additionally, should the agent's interlocutory order be approved, they will only have to provide a bank or other financial guarantee to prove that funds are available to pay the ADM, rather than the disputed amount being automatically deducted from an agent's next BSP. The new wording will be voted on at PaConf in November and, if approved, will state the following:

1.10.5 an Agent may within 30 days of the date of the Notice of Default Action invoke Resolution 820e for review of the Agency Administrator's action by Travel Agency Commissioner and may also apply for an interlocutory order staying the Default Action and preserve status quo pending outcome of the review. Before granting an interlocutory order under such subparagraph, the Travel Agency Commissioner shall require the Agent to provide a bank or other financial

guarantee and ensure all amounts due as determined under subparagraph 1.10.2(ii) are settled at the time the interlocutory order takes effect.

"While Asata cannot intervene in the process of an agency disputing an ADM with an airline, according to Resolution 820d, we have been working in our capacity as the chair of the WTAAA to review the Post Billing Dispute provisions under Resolution 818g," says Otto. He adds that, if it is passed, travel agents worldwide would have recourse for a period of 30 days to liaise with the Travel Agency Commissioner to dispute ADMs.

"Further to this, Asata has also been working with the ADM Working Group to assess the root causes of ADMs being issued in the first place, and a report has just been issued that outlines these, and a roadmap created to reduce ADMs in future," Otto says. ■



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