

TNW

TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

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Cough up!

Court tells government departments

TESSA REED

TWO government departments that failed to pay a TMC outstanding travel accounts have been ordered by the high court to pay the accounts with interest as well as costs.

After repeatedly invoicing Icasa and the KwaZulu Natal Department of Health to no avail, Duma Travel saw no option but to take the matter to court. "When you have submitted invoices 10 times and your suppliers are sitting on your neck,

what do you do?" **Themba Mthombeni**, founder and ceo of Duma asks.

Themba says the accounts from the two departments amounted to millions. Duma has been battling for three years to get its money out of the KwaZulu Natal Department of Health.

The company has a further three court cases with non-paying departments pending.

Themba says the issue of non-payment by government departments is a massive issue in the travel industry, although people are

reluctant to talk about it for fear of losing government business. Non-payment places immense pressure on small agencies in particular, and can destroy companies, he says. He points out that the amounts owed are significant and banks won't finance government debt.

Still, Themba says a number of departments are doing the right thing, by either implementing lodge cards to better manage payment, or increasing their administrative capacity to pay on time. ■



Back to school with SAA

SAA will host agents in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban on November 21, 22 and 23 respectively to educate the trade about its world fares and other offerings. Pictured here is Faith Sikakane, regional sales manager – coastal sales Cape Town, Durban, East London and Port Elizabeth. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Air France KLM propels agents off GDS

TESSA REED

COME April 1 next year, Air France KLM will introduce a GDS charge of €11 (R180) per one way on GDS sales. This means that for a round trip (for example JNB-CDG-NYC-CDG-JNB), the surcharge applies twice. Groups will be exempted from the charge.

Air France KLM is the latest airline to introduce the surcharge, following similar

moves by Lufthansa, British Airways and Iberia.

The airline said in a memo to agents that the surcharge

"AF KLM has strong appetite to deal direct."

would cover the cost difference between the GDS model and the corresponding costs of Air France and KLM direct

sales and is subject to change in the future. The airline said the current GDS model represented higher costs than other options and came with more constraints.

The surcharge will not apply to sales via an NDC API connection (available in January 2018), the Air France KLM Agent Booking Tool (deployed from April 1, 2018) or to Air France and KLM direct sales channels.

But while Air France KLM is applying a surcharge to bookings on the GDS, a recent deal struck between IAG (International Airlines Group), which owns British Airways and Iberia, has seen Flight Centre Travel Group, Amex and HRG exempted from the surcharge when booking on Amadeus.

This scenario suggests it's not implausible that similar deals could be struck between other airlines and agents,

allowing them to bypass these surcharges. Asked if a similar deal was in the pipeline for Air France KLM bookings on Amadeus, a spokesperson said: "We will engage with AF KLM to find a sustainable, long-term agreement that suits all players across the travel industry. We cannot comment on specific details beyond that at this stage."

Andrew Stark, md of Flight
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TNW TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY

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'We won't interfere' – new SAA chair

DARISE FOSTER

THE roles of various stakeholders at SAA have been clearly laid out and the airline's new board has vowed to stay away from the day-to-day operations of the airline.

Former SAA chairperson, **Dudu Myeni**, was often accused of getting over involved in decision-making at the airline, but new chairperson, **JB Magwaza**, says his board will leave the running of the embattled national carrier to its executive committee.

Speaking at a recent media briefing, JB said the lack of designation of roles, functions and relationships between

the airline, the board and the National Treasury as the airline's shareholder, was one of the major factors that caused problems for SAA.

"The job of running the company belongs to the ceo and his executives."

"The board will be quite involved for the next month or two as the plan for the implementation of the turnaround strategy is laid out, but otherwise the job of running the company belongs to the ceo and his executives – and we as the board will not interfere," said JB.

Finance Minister, **Malusi Gigaba**, agreed and added

that newly appointed SAA ceo, **Vuyani Jarana**, had been given the power to run the airline.

There is still no clear understanding as to how SAA will continue to operate as a going concern.

The Minister said the issue of funding SAA would be addressed in the next few months. "[For now], the remaining R4,8bn of the R10bn allocated to SAA will be paid in instalments of R1bn at the end of every month up to March 31, 2018. We are also continuing with discussions to bring a strategic equity partner on board to provide private-sector capital as well as expertise for the airline to move forward and bring it back to sustainability." ■

Tourvest names chief exec

SEAN Joubert has been appointed chief executive of the integrated tourism group, Tourvest, from January 1. He succeeds **Tommy Edmond**, who retires at the end of the year.

Sean, 50, is currently the coo of Quintica a UK-registered company that streamlines and automates business processes and workflows. Before that, he was chief financial officer of Dimension Data MEA

(Middle East and Africa) and managing director of the Dimension Data Systems Integration Business for MEA. Educated at the University of Johannesburg, he is a chartered accountant by profession.

Tourvest chairman, **Robert Gumede**, said that



Sean Joubert

with Sean's technological background, solid mergers and acquisition experience, and proven record in building businesses in South Africa and elsewhere in Africa, he would be

an invaluable asset to Tourvest. ■

Botswana routes in the pipeline for domestic carrier

TESSA REED

CEMAIR has applied for four routes into Botswana and plans to apply for additional routes into other SADC countries and expand its domestic network in the first quarter of next year.

The routes applied for are Johannesburg to Gaborone, Maun and Kasane as well as Cape Town to Gaborone.

The applications for the routes were in the final phase, ceo **Miles van der Molen** told TNW.

He explained that the licences had been issued and the airline was just waiting for Botswana to designate the frequency on the route.

Cemair already operates flights from Cape Town to Gaborone on behalf of Air Botswana on a wet-lease basis. However, when the airline starts operating its own flights, it is likely to enter into a codeshare with Air Botswana.

In terms of the airline's domestic expansion, Miles

said it would increase frequencies on the Bloemfontein route and also introduce new routes.

Cemair was also expanding its fleet, having recently taken delivery of a Bombardier Q400, while a CRJ 900 would be coming online soon too, said Miles.

There has been much talk of the acquisition of Air Botswana, but Miles confirmed that while Cemair had submitted an expression of interest, it had not received feedback on this. ■

To the point

Aha Hotels & Lodges continues to expand in Zambia after signing a full management and marketing contract for the Kafue River Cliff Hotel and Conference Centre, effective September 15. The hotel is scheduled to open its doors in August next year. The four-star establishment offers 52 en-suite rooms – 48 executive double rooms and four luxury suites – all overlooking the Kafue River.

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All together now!

Bid Travel recently moved to a new office space, bringing together the various brands under the group: HRG Rennies Travel, Carlson Wagonlit Travel, BCD and Harvey World. The new building is at 26 Girton Road, Parktown. Pictured here from left are: Bronwyn Philipps, ceo HRG Rennies Travel; Ben Langner, ceo Carlson Wagonlit Travel; Marco Cristofoli, coo Leisure and acting md BCD; and Lidia Folli, ceo Bidvest Travel Holdings.

AF KLM revamps loyalty programme

FROM April 1 next year, Air France KLM will re-jig its loyalty programme, Flying Blue, and travellers will earn miles for each euro spent.

Ivory, Silver, Gold and Platinum members will receive 4, 6, 7 and 8 miles respectively. The number of miles earned will no longer depend on the distance

flown between origin and destination. Customers will also be able to earn miles when purchasing ancillaries.

The miles needed for a ticket will be based on origin, destination and flight date.

Flying Blue is also introducing experience points, which determine the level of membership and

are calculated according to the type of flight (domestic, medium-haul or long-haul) and the travel cabin chosen by the customer.

The airline says this will make the accrual of miles easier and clearer.

The balance of award miles as of March 31, 2018 will remain unchanged on April 1, 2018. ■

Hotels seek direct bookings over OTAs

LIESL VENTER

THE wrangle between hotels and online travel agencies (OTAs) can only intensify as hotels step up their drive for direct bookings.

Understandably so, said Velly Bosega, ceo of Adclick Africa, as OTA commissions are hurting hotel revenues worldwide. He was at the recent Direct Booking Indaba in Cape Town.

Velly said about 76% of hotel bookings were done through OTAs, which charged anything between

15% and 25% commission per booking.

According to Velly, the prevailing assumption among travellers is that they can get the best hotel deals if they make their booking with an OTA.

“Research shows that some 52% of travellers, from their interaction with an OTA, still visit the website of the hotel they are interested in. They want to see what it looks like, if the hotel exists, what the facilities are, but instead of then booking direct, they revert to the OTA.”

“More and more hotels are realising that there is a major opportunity in keeping that 52% of traffic they are already pulling.” He said for hotels to entice travellers to book directly, streamlining of websites to offer a more user-friendly service would be essential.

He said many of the major hotel chains had realised the value of direct booking and several had been on drives to increase direct bookings. He said the relationship with the guest was probably the biggest driver. ■

No easy walk from employee to ITC – agent

SARAH ROBERTSON

OVER the last decade and a half, the industry has seen a stream of consultants leaving formal employment positions and signing up as ITCs. While the benefits of working as an ITC have been widely publicised, the risks and consequences involved when an ITC does not turn a sufficient profit have seen less focus. Canvassed ITCs report that while overall ITC numbers in the industry continue to grow it is not uncommon for consultants to try out the ITC model for a year or two before re-entering the formal job market seeking the benefits of a stable, fixed income.

Rudy Botha, a former ITC advised that he had worked as a fare specialist for most of his 30-year career. However, as travel agency margins had shrunk together with technological advances in booking engines, many fare specialist positions had been made redundant and only a handful of similar jobs remained for a position that was now largely obsolete.

Rudy made the decision to start out as an ITC a year ago, inspired by the success stories from colleagues. While Rudy was extremely positive about the structure and support systems offered to ITCs who were starting out, he also spoke out about how

difficult the reality of starting a company from scratch had been.

Among the challenges that Rudy faced as an ITC, was starting out without a single client. Sales and marketing functions were also new to him. His own circle of acquaintances have little disposable income to spend on international travel and generally book direct.

When it came to corporate clients, Rudy found that larger corporates tended to sign two to five year fixed term contracts with their TMCs. He did not have enough working capital to wait out these periods until the accounts in which he was interested came up for tender.

Rudy says ITCs should try to save up working capital to last them for more than a year before making the move towards self-employment. Increasing internal competition from a growing ITC market has also resulted in unrealistic turnaround time expectations from corporate clients who demanded quotes within 2 hours for international trips and within an hour for domestic trips.

After persevering for nine months, Rudy finally threw in the towel, but has since found that re-entering the job market after a period of self-employment comes with challenges of its own. He is currently considering leaving the industry entirely. ■

To the point



The InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG), in partnership with Leisure Hotel Holdings (Pty) Ltd, has announced the signing of the first new Holiday Inn in Cape Town in recent years. Currently operating as the Strand Tower Hotel, the 242-room property will rebrand as a Holiday Inn later this year.

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A snapshot of the week's airline news

EU closes compensation loophole

Passengers who miss connecting flights outside EU can now claim compensation from the airlines, following a recent UK Court of Appeal ruling.

EU legislation stipulates that all passenger with flights delayed for more than three hours when travelling from or into the EU can claim to up to EUR600 (R9 896) of compensation. However, several non-EU airlines have been treating connecting journeys as two flights instead of one, thereby exploiting a loophole in the EU law and not paying compensation for delays.

Earlier this year, the UK Civil Aviation Authority claimed that five airlines – American Airlines, Emirates, Etihad, Singapore Airlines and Turkish Airlines – failed to pay compensation to more than 200 000 passengers who had their flights delayed.

The Court of Appeal has now ruled in favour of the UK CAA and concluded that the airlines are legally obliged to pay out. The ruling means passengers of non-EU airlines, who experienced a delay on the first leg of a flight, missed a connecting flight therefore arrived at their final destination at least

three hours late, can claim compensation. This applies whether the final destination is within or outside the EU.

South African passengers can also claim compensation from airlines under these regulations for all flights out of the UK, according to a spokesperson for the CAA.

Following the ruling, **Andrew Haines**, ce of the CAA points out that for a family of four this compensation could be worth as much as EUR2 400 (R39 588). "We will not hesitate to take further action if airlines fail to comply." ■

Airlink adds second CPT-KMIA flight

Airlink has added a second direct flight to its Cape Town – Nelspruit KMIA routing. The additional flights operate every day of the week except Saturday. Flight SA8665 and SA8668 are operated on a 36-seater Embraer RJ135. SA8665 departs Cape Town at 15h00 and arrives at Nelspruit KMIA at 17h15. SA8668 departs KMIA at 17h35 and arrives in the Mother City at 20h00. These flights are in addition to SA8663 departing CPT daily at 10h00 and arriving KMIA at 12h35 and SA8664 departing KMIA daily at 13h15 and arriving 15h55.

Fifth Thailand route for QR

Qatar Airways is to launch a fifth route to Thailand next year. Direct flights from Doha to Pattaya International Airport will commence on January 28, 2018. The four weekly flights will be operated on a Boeing 787 Dreamliner, with 22 seats in business class and 232 seats in economy class. QR is the first Middle Eastern airline to offer flights to Pattaya. On Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays flight QR 8282 departs Doha (DOH) at 20h05 arrives in Pattaya (UTP) at 06h30. On Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays flight QR 829 departs UTP at 07h50 and arrives in DOH at 11h40.

More seats to Seychelles for Christmas

Air Seychelles will increase capacity on certain flights from Johannesburg for the festive season by replacing the Airbus A320 with an Airbus A330. Capacity will be increased on the following flights: HM060 and HM061 between November 29 and December 9. HM0261 between November 28 and December 9. HM260 between November 29 and December 9. The Airbus A330 has 18 seats in business class and 236 seats in economy class.

New operator to focus on domestic groups

A newly-launched venture called Soul Traveller Tours aims to sell group travel in South Africa.

Penny Ndelela, ceo of Soul Traveller told TNW the operator is very keen to work with travel agents and is

open to paying commissions.

Soul Traveller Tours is the result of a collaboration with Thebe Tourism Group.

"Thebe Tourism Group realises the need to grow the domestic tourism market, says **Jerry Mabena**,

ceo of Thebe Tourism Group. "Through a strategic investment approach, focusing on untapped markets like domestic group travel, we hope to achieve impact and transformation." ■



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AGENT TRAINING & RECRUITMENT



Finding and retaining the best people with the right knowledge and skills is challenging, writes Chana Boucher.

Travel industry willing but not able to transform

DESPITE efforts and substantial investment in achieving BBBEE requirements by most stakeholders, the travel industry still has much to do.

According to **Themba Mthombeni**, ceo of Duma Travel, the effects of the need to transform have been felt in stages. First, the industry was in shock at the requirement to implement the changes. Following, came the realisation that business could be lost should an organisation not transform. "Now, we're at the stage where businesses are looking for solutions, and those don't come easy and they don't come cheap. The industry is trying to transform, but it hasn't taken root yet," he says.

According to **Kirby Gordon**, head of sales and distribution at FlySafair, the country is still struggling to make the fundamental changes that BBBEE demands. "The travel industry is by no means a lagging industry in the



Kirby Gordon

broader context of South African business, but we all still have a long way to go."

Claire Ginn, HR manager at Club Travel, says a big challenge for transformation is the lack of sufficient skills in specified groups.

"Development and training programmes for students from the designated groups can be used to address this as well as to upskill and train current employees who fall within this category to move to more senior roles," she says.

Club Travel, she explains, has a transformation forum in place that meets once a quarter. "The forum [is] constantly sourcing new and innovative ways to educate the Club Travel group on the latest developments on employment equity and skills development." The forum also reviews all appointments made in the period to ensure equity requirements are met.

FlySafair, according to Kirby, has identified a number of challenges in aviation that need to be addressed. "In our view, there are two very important considerations here: the protection and

empowerment of girls and women, and improvement of general and industry-specific education. To that end we've been working in the background to focus on these goals, both within our organisation and within our broader industry and communities."

Erica Kennedy-Smith, national travel manager at Lee Botti & Associates, says larger tour operators and agencies are definitely under pressure to get their BEE numbers up. "I have been told by several of my clients that they've been instructed to only employ BEE candidates in the short term, especially agencies dealing with government contracts and large corporates."

Asata, says ceo **Otto de Vries**, is conducting a Market Index Study that will include BBBEE. "We are investigating where we stand as an industry currently in terms of transformation and where the gaps are so that we're able to provide a clearer picture to all stakeholders." The results are due early next year, and Otto says these will provide a better understanding of the industry's BBBEE profile and requirements. Further, he says Asata is encouraging groupings contributing to the association to nominate board members with transformation in mind.

ADM training about to go live

IT HIT like a bolt from the blue. The infamous R42 000 ADM recently (TNW August 30) grabbed the headlines, but in fact many ADMs have been even higher, with potential to break the consultant and even drive them out of travel.

Now Travelinfo and travel data management partner Agentivity, have put together the first online training workshop.

The workshop was written for agents by expert fare and ticketing agents in South Africa and will be hosted on Travelinfo Workshops from November.

"Our 365/24 travel supplier classroom will now also carry skills training," said divisional head, **Linda van der Pol**. "In view of the mystery and fear that often surrounds ADMs, we have chosen that subject as the first skills workshop. Coming soon after will be 'Get Travel Sales Fit' and an 'Introduction to Corporate Travel' for entrants into travel.

Like the supplier workshops, there will be six modules for the ADM workshop that include what an ADM is, why they



"In view of the mystery and fear that often surrounds ADMs, we have chosen that subject as the first skills workshop." Linda van der Pol.

are issued, how they are raised, the most common causes, examples and dispute resolution.

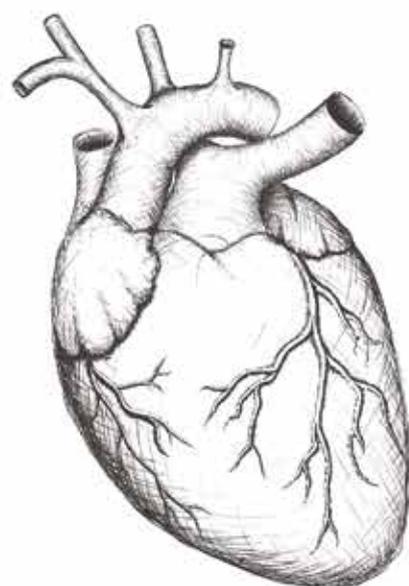
This workshop and other skills workshops will be free to the 3 400 consultants on the Travelinfo Plus edition. Travel agents who do not have the premium version of Travelinfo can do the course for R950, including VAT.

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of consultants at travel agencies say that management is the one thing they'd change at work.

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Mind the gap

THE travel industry is growing and evolving, yet fewer skilled consultants are entering the market. How can agencies ensure they have adequate resources to provide clients with the best possible service?

For **Themba Mthombeni** of Duma Travel, one solution is to look inside the organisation and ensure staff have the relevant skills. He points out that the travel industry is not a very academically oriented one. "Usually it is the tough-as-nails, dog-eat-dog consultants who are promoted to senior positions because they prove themselves able to handle a



"Most of the intermediate to senior consultants are reluctant to move for fear of entering a 'last in first out' situation."
Erica Kennedy-Smith

tough situation in the workplace."

But many of these individuals don't have any formal leadership or management training.

According to Themba, their challenges are often more complex than other industries, yet they are not adequately trained to handle them.

Club Travel's **Claire Ginn** highlights a shortage for skilled

positions such as senior leisure consultants and refunds/BSP. **Erica Kennedy-Smith** of Lee Botti & Associates confirms this, adding that "most of the intermediate to senior consultants are reluctant to move for fear of entering a 'last in first out' situation".

Attracting young blood

OTTO de Vries at Asata says there is a general recognition that there are not enough young professionals entering the sector. "As an industry, we need to do more to speak to the younger generation and to persuade them that this is a professional industry with development prospects."

Duma's **Themba Mthombeni** suggests recruiting "sharp graduates" from universities, training them, empowering them with a succession plan, exposing them to different layers such as management principles and making sure to retain them. "If a youngster thinks 'one day I'll run this business', they'll stick around," he says.

If all agencies started doing their bit in terms of training, he believes, there would be a flood of talent, which would result in salaries

becoming more realistic. "We need the critical mass of organisations thinking further than just making a buck now; they must be thinking about sustainability."

"Companies should provide sufficient resources, tools and educational and create effective in-house training programmes."

Club Travel, says **Claire Ginn**, often participates in open career days held at various tertiary institutions. "The main goal is to engage with young talent and provide them with an insight into the industry and the different career paths available to those who study travel." But more could be done to attract youth through continuous training and

information sessions, providing a platform to engage with industry professionals and travel suppliers.

Carolyn Dreyer, reservations manager at Beachcomber, believes travel companies providing job shadowing opportunities will help young people gain insight into the travel industry and encourage travel and tourism as a career choice. "Companies should provide sufficient resources, tools and educational and create effective in-house training programmes to further develop young talent they have identified, working together with these young people to grow them to their ultimate potential to retain them and their skills long term."

Similarly, Erica says agencies with in-house training facilities are bringing in young recruits

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AGENT TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT

From page 10

with attitude as opposed to aptitude. "Many of these young recruits don't even have a qualification in travel but have a very keen desire to enter the industry with the right attitude," she says.

She adds that many graduates haven't completed practicals and that job shadowing or volunteering opportunities should be more available to youngsters for them to get a better feel for their chosen field.

To attract young talent, **Nathan Stubbs**, sales, transport and customer care manager for Club Med South Africa, says travel companies should offer clear career paths and the opportunity to learn, develop and progress quickly. Being up to date with technology and in line with market trends keeps a company relevant to young talent, he says. "We must offer the opportunity to travel and see the world; it is what we all love

about the travel industry and a key attraction for recruitment."

According to Otto, it's difficult to correlate the size of the industry and the number of travel consultants, since the skills required of consultants are different to those of the past. "Technology acts to automate transactions so the world of travel is different ... One needs to look at how the requirements of our customers are changing and the role that technology can play to automate transactions and free up skilled and professional consultants to perform a more professional role that delivers true value. It's less about quantity in the travel space than it is about quality. We need new blood, not because the industry is growing, but because the profile of the travel consultant role has to change," says Otto.

40 and fabulous!



The staff of Lee Botti & Associates in Johannesburg recently marked a milestone of 40 years' service to the travel industry. Lee Botti, a trained teacher, founded the specialist recruitment agency in 1977, initially as a hobby. It now operates nationally, having opened in Durban in 1986 and Cape Town in 1987. Lee still plays an important role in the company, but her passion is now, iThuba!, a project that takes her back to her teaching days. iThuba! transports matriculants and grade 11s from Khayelitsha and surrounding communities to the Waterfront in Cape Town, where Lee and team provide a three-hour workshop on entering the job market. Above, Carol Britz, Tracey Ciorovich, Bernadine van Zijl, Pat Fyfer, Kim Botti and Hani Sinthumule, celebrate the agency's combined 165 years of experience and successful track record. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

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Tech vital to training and recruitment

RATHER than ignore or fear technology, travel companies should take advantage of the benefits it brings, including the possibilities for improved training and attracting a new generation of consultant.

"Combining the power of cutting-edge technology with their personal experience and knowledge will allow [travel agents] to deliver a seamless, personalised experience to their customers," says **Richard Addy**, country director of Sabre SA.

But there's more to gain from the latest tech. "Technology enables our consultants to deliver the best deal to their customers and therefore it is an essential part of

the position," says **Claire Ginn** of Club Travel. She says consultants are encouraged through ongoing training programmes that focus on the positive impact of technology on their roles. "As part of our DNA we are continuously looking at methods of self-improvement and utilising technology to improve our recruitment, staff training, marketing and internal flows to name a few."

Technology also makes training easier and, in most instances, cheaper. Claire says: "We have numerous training initiatives that are technology driven and these have allowed us to reduce costs in staff training."

Although Cruises International offers

personalised training with individual agents and hosts regular roadshows, says luxury brand manager **Seymour Brugger**, it also has its own online training tool called Shipmates, which enables agents to train at their own pace.

The latest technology can also make the industry more attractive to young people considering a career in travel. "Demonstrating an openness to new technologies is key," says **Kirby Gordon** at FlySafair, as youngsters actively seek technology in the workplace.

"Technology solutions with an intuitive user experience can dramatically reduce education times and prevent frustration as inexperienced agents can



start to build their industry knowledge and destination expertise without having to familiarise themselves with the many codes and commands that required a lot of training," explains Richard. He believes both new and experienced agents will appreciate the uncomplicated way branded fares and ancillaries are displayed, given the growing complexity of travel products.

"Providing a great user experience is a core feature in the latest generation

of Sabre solutions," adds Richard. The new Sabre Red Workspace, for instance, offers a consumer-grade user interface as well as the option to switch between the cryptic mode of entry and an easy-to-use graphic interface. "Experienced travel agents can continue to use the cryptic demand with which they are familiar, while beginners can opt for the graphical layout, which dramatically decreases the barriers for entry and reduces training times," he says.

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TNW8451SD

The world at your desk

CLUB Med recently invested in developing virtual reality headsets. "This 360-degree VR experience allows agents to visit our resorts without leaving the comfort of their office. One moment they are responding to emails in Johannesburg,

the next they are hitting the slopes in the French Alps or scuba diving in the Maldives. This is the future and something we continue to develop," says **Nathan Stubbs**, sales, transport and customer care manager at Club Med South Africa.



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TNW8447SD

What employees want

BASED on her experience of interviewing candidates, **Erica Kennedy-Smith** from Lee Botti & Associates, highlights some of the needs they hope employers will meet.

She says candidates are looking for growth and variety in their day. "They often feel that they are kept in one position working on the same accounts because that's what they're good at and their managers are reluctant to move them around or upward as it upsets the apple cart." This, **Claire Ginn** says, is short-sighted as moving consultants around and keeping them challenged is key to retaining their skills.

"There also seems to be an increase in companies offering their seasoned staff the opportunity to work remotely from home, which allows them a certain flexibility – this is generally for long-service employees though," adds Claire.

She also says most travel companies feel it is advantageous for candidates to have previously travelled internationally, but that not many candidates have had the opportunity to do so. "If this were afforded to them, it would most certainly make a huge difference in their ability to assist their clients and sell destinations," she adds.

The best thing about travel ...

"The travel industry allows you to explore your true potential and tests your ability to impress the client.

There are also fantastic opportunities to travel abroad and experience the destinations you sell to improve your knowledge, skill and expertise." – **Claire Ginn**, HR manager, Club Travel

"The travel industry is exciting and enriching. No two days are the same. To know that you are able to make clients' dreams come true by sending

them on magical holidays is not only fulfilling but a unique privilege." – **Seymour Brugger**, luxury brand manager, Cruises International

"Having interviewed many travel candidates, I've come to the conclusion that travel is a calling and a passion. It's not just a job ... it can be exciting and rewarding, and extremely fulfilling." – **Erica Kennedy-Smith**, national travel manager, Lee Botti & Associates.

Duma Travel to launch academy

DUMA Travel is launching a training academy that will cover all the bases for anyone working in travel, from consultants to branch managers.

The academy is set to launch early next year and will comprise different components, explains Duma's **Themba Mthombeni**.

Various training options including key accounts management, service orientation and how to do RFPs, will be provided through the Uniglobe platform, exposing the trade to international best practice.

Duma is also concluding a deal with a travel technical college to train consultants on fares and GDS work, and is finalising a programme with a reputable university that will offer courses on leadership within the agency environment. This will include management, supervisory and financial training and an overall



Themba Mthombeni

perspective on the business, with basics such as how to read an income statement, and how to measure performance.

Themba says an academy on this level, specifically in the travel industry, will do the "world of good as it ensures there are professional teams running the industry."

By law, travel companies have to spend a percentage of their budget on training to meet the necessary BEE requirements. According to Themba, the type of person this new academy will provide will be highly targeted and practical. "It is a transformation imperative to employ people from previously disadvantaged backgrounds at different levels of your organisation. Where are they to come from if the industry doesn't train them? This will raise the standard in the industry," he says.



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Travelinfo takes online workshops to the next level

TRAVEL agents are now able to improve their product and destination knowledge, whenever it suits them to do so, with Travelinfo's 365/24 classroom.

Linda van der Pol, divisional head of Travelinfo, says the new online workshops are all about continuous training and development. "Workshops are available for a longer period now, making them more accessible to agents and encouraging commitment

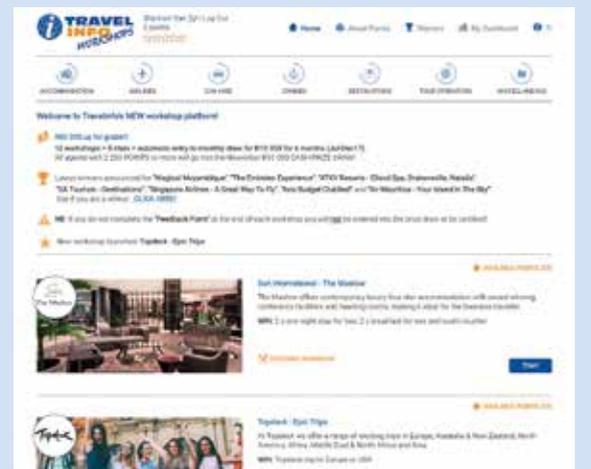
to training," she says.

With 365/24, agents can choose when and which level of study they want to undertake. If the product is completely new to them, they can complete the Full Workshop, while those already familiar with the product can simply do an Update Workshop that focuses on changes and recent developments.

For managers, 365/24 can be linked to their staff's KPIs (something Linda says

Tourvest and Flight Centre have already adopted). Agents earn points for every workshop completed and these translate into stars. "Points expire after 365 days so it is important for agents to continuously complete workshops to maintain their training status," she explains.

Linda adds that with 365/24, monthly reports are sent to consortium heads and branch managers detailing staff performances



Travelinfo workshops were relaunched earlier this year.

in terms of number of workshops completed, points earned and star ratings. Suppliers also get a monthly feedback report detailing participation figures. These include agents' feedback and geographic information. "This is expected to boost participation numbers," says Linda.

Since the relaunch of Travelinfo Workshops earlier this year, close to 3 500 agents have successfully

completed workshops. There is no special software needed; the workshops are available on the Travelinfo platform and are easy to use.

Linda says further developments in the pipeline include customised training for consortiums for their preferred suppliers and customised skills training for Travelinfo Plus users. Keep an eye out for these exciting enhancements.

TNW8448SD

Tour operators value geographic training

When recruiting for tour operators, **Erica Kennedy-Smith** of Lee Botti & Associates says educationals, physical travel to the destinations sold and geographic training are still essential. "This information is far better gathered through physical experience than online research," she adds.

Apart from the required experience, Beachcomber Tours SA looks for candidates who are extremely organised, customer focussed, accurate and efficient, according to reservations

manager **Carolyn Dreyer**. In addition, they must be able to work within a highly pressurised and fast-paced environment. Team players and those who care about delivering service excellence are also viewed favourably.

Erica also notes resistance at times from senior consultants who don't have the 'millennial skills' that juniors and intermediates do, and says it is vital for them to embrace changes in an environment where up-to-date technological skills are highly valued. ■

TNW7854

Births, deaths, marriages, promotions – we want to know! Please fax or e-mail TNW's Candice May, at candicem@nowmedia.co.za or (011) 214 7330.



Wedding Crashers!

Beachcomber Tours threw a Wedding Crashers-themed party for Pentravel agents from head office and the Cape region to educate them about their different wedding packages, honeymoon specials and renewal of vow ceremonies. Pictured (from left back) are **Paulo De Oliveira**, ceo of Pentravel; **Ettienne Walters**, sales executive of Beachcomber Tours; and **Nadia Gouws**, **Carolyn Fall**, **Nadine Norman** and (front from left) **Melissa Colby** and **Megan Opperman**, all agents of Pentravel Somerset West.



Flying high

Lufthansa celebrated and awarded over 15 of its top agents at Morrells Boutique Hotel. Pictured receiving the top agency nationwide for group travel award is **Lois Graham**, head of BCD Meetings & Events SA, with **Renee Peltzer**, account manager of Lufthansa SA (left) and **André Schulz**, gm of Lufthansa SA. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

Appointments

■ **Anita Kongson** has decided to leave Emirates Nairobi to pursue other options. Emirates Nairobi is in the process of appointing a new country manager, however in the interim, **Olga Pryimak**, regional finance and administration manager will be in charge of the day-to-day running of the Nairobi office, and **Nafisa Salim**, key accounts manager will co-ordinate issues related to sales.

■ SANParks recently appointed **Reuben Ngwenya** as the new gm of the northern region parks: Marakele, Mapungubwe, and the Golden Gate. He replaces **Lombard Shirindzi**, who left to pursue other interests. Reuben was formerly the regional manager at the KNP. He has more than 27 years of experience in the field of conservation. He holds a Master's degree in Environmental Management.

Say cheese!



Travel industry leaders gathered at Mezepoli Melrose Arch for the recent Gentlemen in Travel lunch. It was a fabulous afternoon of networking, catching up and, of course, feasting on Greek food. Pictured snapping a selfie (from left) are **Robyn Christie**, gm of Travelpart SA; **Desmond O'Connor**, gm of kulula holidays; **Alexis Bekker**, head of sales and marketing for SA and Africa of LUX* Resorts & Hotels; and **Eugene Cronje**, sales manager of Virgin Atlantic.

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TNW7719

Trade insurance is tipped over trust accounts, bonding

SARAH ROBERTSON

THE topic of regulation to safeguard clients from the risk of being defrauded in the travel chain is once more front of mind since the recent Sikuku Travel (TNW October 18) scandal was revealed.

Bonding and other options have frequently been floated as possible solutions.

As an example, TNW looked at Ontario, Canada, where regulation of travel agencies' trust accounts was introduced in 2002. Ontario law decrees that client funds may only be deposited into a licensed agency's trust account.

If an agent is reported for incorrectly spending client funds or selling travel when not licensed, charges are laid that often result in large fines or prison sentences. The enabling legislation allows for the industry to self-regulate and also build up a compensation fund for travellers affected when there is an insolvency.

Asata is currently working on a regulation report that compares the various schemes available for safeguarding client funds that have been implemented in different industries around the world. Once the report has been finalised, the findings will be put to Asata members to vote.

Otto de Vries, Asata ceo, says the preliminary research showed that trust accounts

were not the most practical option for implementation in the South African travel industry due to the rapid flow of cash in and out of agency accounts and the nature of splitting lump sum payments to distribute to multiple suppliers, many of which involved forex payments.

Otto added that group bonding scheme proposals had also not been met with much popularity among South African retailers who felt that

“Clients would be offered the option to take out a voluntary insurance policy.”

these schemes might result in a scenario where the larger, more stable retail partners would be subsidising the agencies that were at risk.

“That leaves insurance, which is currently perceived as the option most likely to be introduced in the South African travel industry.

“Clients would be offered the option to take out a voluntary insurance policy, which would safeguard their holiday investment from the risk of a travel agent or other third-party supplier's insolvency,” said Otto.

Jason Veitch, head of TIC, said the issue insurers would face in terms of creating a product to protect the agent's failure, was the lack of support from the large consortiums.

“The large consortiums are well funded and do not need this type of product, which then leaves a minority of agency clients who would be buyers, which would mean the insurer would not be able to amass the necessary risk pool to cover the exposure a foreclosure would cost the insurer.”

He added that the promotion of agent insolvency cover by a smaller or independent agent might also be to their detriment if the larger consortiums promoted their independent financial stability.

“We are lucky in South Africa in that, historically, our agents have demonstrated that they are ethical in their conduct with their clients,” said Jason. “Looking at the market as a whole, the likelihood of a client being defrauded by a South African agent is very slim, eliminating the real need for this type of policy in the market.”

Garth Wolff, ceo of eTravel, argues that individual bonding is preferable to trust accounts, which, he explains, are costly to administrate.

Garth said eTravel secured its lata guarantee in a fixed deposit account that earned a good interest rate for the group and also safeguarded the client's funds as eTravel was not able to touch this money. “The problem is that not all agents operate in this manner; some tap into clients' money.”



More Mauritius!

Kulula holidays is offering a range of deals to Mauritius. Packages start at R19 765pps for seven nights and include breakfast and dinner. Soaking up the sun are (left) Lerato Motsatse, account manager, and Nobuhle Sehlangu, travel consultant, of kulula holidays. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

AF KLM

From page 1

Centre Travel Group Africa, suggested that the group would not look for a similar deal with Air France KLM from a local perspective, although he didn't rule it out for the group's other territories. “One thing we know about Air France KLM in the South African market is that they have a strong appetite to deal direct and they don't have a strong relationship with

the retail trade.”

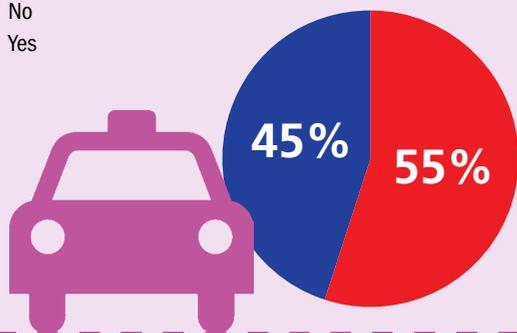
An official Sabre statement reads: “It is disappointing to see AF KLM introduce a surcharge that will impose costs and inconvenience for using the GDS channel. We will be discussing options with the airline. As always, our driving goal is to provide a balanced solution that meets the needs of airlines, agencies and consumers.” ■

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Agents divided over Uber

Would you sell Uber to your clients through the GDS?

- No
- Yes



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Supplier insolvency cover

Although agent or tour operator insolvency is not currently covered by travel insurance premiums in SA, supplier insolvency does form part of most generic policies, offering clients the ability to recoup funds should a client's travel arrangements be affected by airline, cruise line, hotel, car rental, rail or coach operator insolvency.

Jason says TIC's standard, comprehensive, senior, youth and business plans include travel supplier insolvency cover ranging from R10 000 to R25 000 per policy. This benefit is a standalone risk with its own limit that remains separate from policy cancellation cover benefits.

Jason said claim

procedures were very straightforward if a small supplier were to declare insolvency. However, in the event of the insolvency of a large airline or supplier, the procedure would be more lengthy, due to the processes that would have to be set up to handle an influx of tens of thousands of passenger claims. ■

IAG to grow long-haul low-cost operations

INTERNATIONAL Airlines Group (IAG) is looking to expand its long-haul low-cost operations in the coming year, although whether low-cost flights to South Africa will be considered remains unclear.

Willie Walsh, chief executive of IAG, said at the Air Operators Association

Conference in London that he expected the group's new long-haul low-cost carrier, Level, to grow to 30 aircraft over the next five years. A second base for Level is also on the cards, either in Rome or Paris. The airline will shortly get its own air operator's certificate as well

as a dedicated ceo.

Level currently flies to four destinations from Barcelona – Los Angeles, Oakland, Buenos Aires, and Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic. The airline is expected to announce new destinations before the end of the month. ■