

TNW

TRAVEL NEWS WEEKLY



TNW8942SD

FLIGHT CENTRE TRAVEL GROUP

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Maldives' flights take a detour

SARAH ROBERTSON

THE first weekly charter flight between South Africa and the Maldives has been cancelled ahead of its expected departure on November 24. Starlight Holidays, the appointed GSA, has advised that the remainder of the flights on the Johannesburg - Gan route are guaranteed to still take off, however the flights – which were advertised as a non-stop service – will now include an hour refuelling stopover in Mauritius. The Maldives flights were put in place through a joint agreement between Air Tour Operators (ATO) and SAA in July. Starlight Holidays was appointed as the sole GSA for ATO on the

Johannesburg - Gan route. The weekly departures between November 24 and January 12 were promoted as guaranteed non-stop flights with Starlight Holidays advertising that ATO had signed a binding contract, paid deposits and lodged bank guarantees for the balance of all flights. The aircraft operating the route no longer has lie flat business class seats or television screens behind the seats. **Daphne Osborne**, director for Starlight Holidays, said the November 24 flight was cancelled on October 16 when a group withdrew their block booking. She said that FIT bookings were advised of the cancellation on October 18 and were

offered the following week departure with a complimentary upgrade to business class. She said that there was only one booking where the client was unable to accept this offer and they were refunded in full and the agent was still paid their commission. Daphne has confirmed that the inaugural flight will now depart on December 1 and reiterated that all flights have been secured with a deposit and bank guarantee from the charterer. She said that no other flights had been cancelled and were selling well. Regarding the detour via Mauritius, Daphne said that the charterer had requested
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80 years in SA!

KLM Royal Dutch Airlines is celebrating its 80th year of flying to South Africa. KLM launched its first flight to South Africa in 1938. The inaugural flight took off from Amsterdam Airport Schiphol and took three days to arrive in Johannesburg. Gradually a regular service was introduced and the travelling time reduced. Pictured (from left): Mieke van Wijk, duty station manager in Johannesburg and Wouter Vermeulen, gm Southern Africa, Air France KLM.
 Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

WebBeds adds 5 600 hotels in latest acquisition

WEBJET Limited, the parent company of WebBeds, has acquired Destinations of the World (DOTW). The US\$173 million (R 2 478m) acquisition will see DOTW housed alongside JacTravel, TotalStay, Sunhotels, Lots of Hotels and FIT Rooms, within WebBed's fold. DOTW currently has a portfolio of 12 300 directly contracted hotels. Of these, 5 600 are unique to WebBeds, thereby increasing WebBeds directly contracted inventory pool to
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Online Expos debuts new show

THE SA Business Travel Show for corporate travellers will take place on November 22. This is the latest offering from Now Media's Online Expo division. TMCs and suppliers are invited to engage with South African corporate travel buyers through the new Online Expo platform. "We are excited about hosting this show," says **Natalie Cumberlege**, business development
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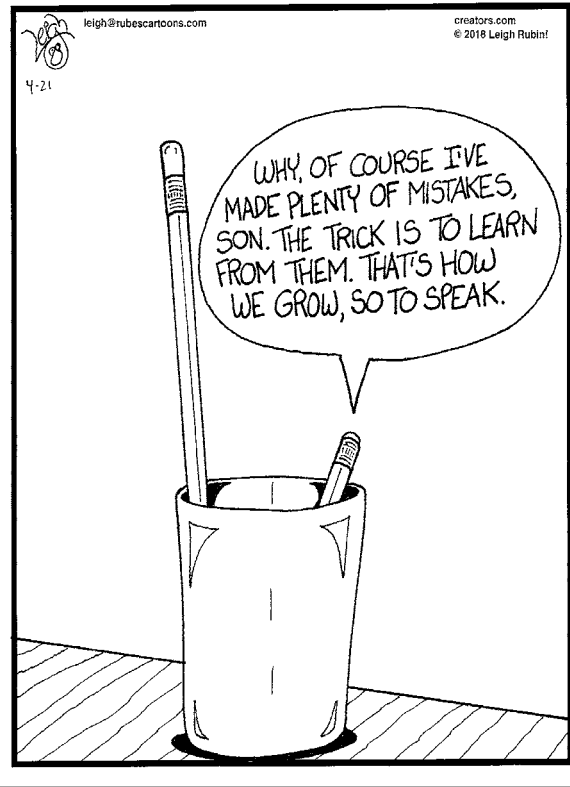
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Online Expos

From page 1
manager of Online Expos. "Our Into Africa show brought in over 300 participants on the day, with fantastic engagement. We are looking to top that for this show."

Online Expos offers suppliers a cost-effective and time-friendly option to reach decision makers in niche markets.
Contact Natalie at nataliec@nowmedia.co.za for more details. ■

Rubes® By Leigh Rubin



US visa clampdown – corporates claim bias

SAVANNAH FREEMANTLE

BLANKET visa rejections by the US Consulate in Johannesburg suggest the Consulate is clamping down on temporary work visa applications and demonstrating a bias, say corporate travel managers.
A travel manager at a large auditing firm told TNW that 21 Johannesburg-based employees and 29 Cape Town-based employees recently applied for the L1B visa, adding that the firm regularly applies for these visas. All the applications made in Cape Town were approved, while all the applications made in Johannesburg were declined. "This was despite the fact that one travel manager, who is well versed in ensuring that the requirements are met, facilitated all of the applications," the travel manager said.
L1B visas are temporary work visas for employees

who are transferred from an office overseas to an office of the same company in the US.
The Johannesburg-based employees claim that the woman who conducted their L1B application interview did not look at the documents provided. "She simply told them that they had applied for the wrong type of visa and the US 'didn't need more auditors'." This makes no

"They were told that they had applied for the wrong type of visa and the US 'didn't need more auditors'."

sense as it's the visa our employees have always used to travel to the US and the Consulate should base the decision on the documentation."
TNW understands that at least three other large auditing firms have reported experiencing the same challenges with the

Johannesburg Consulate. They have also experienced challenges with the Durban Consulate, with a 50% success rate. The travel managers said that terms such as 'auditor' and 'accountant' seem to decrease their chances of having their application approved at the Durban Consulate.
TNW reached out to the US Consulate for an explanation. However, we were told that it could not comment on the rejections without touching on the individual cases, which it is precluded from doing.
Robert Mearkle, US Embassy spokesperson, said: "Consular Officers at US embassies and consulates review and adjudicate visa application based on standards established in US law. While the vast majority of visa applications are approved, US law provides standards under which a visa application may be denied." ■

New Mango boss outlines strategic focus

TESSA REED

NEWLY appointed acting ceo of Mango, **Marelize Labuschagne**, says she will focus on operational efficiency, customer service and economic sustainability during her tenure.
The appointment follows the retirement of **Nic Vlok**, who has been acting in the role since the resignation of former ceo **Nico Bezuidenhout** in 2016.
Marelize, previously Mango Airlines' chief financial officer and gm of Support Services, is a qualified chartered accountant. She has

been with Mango since September 2013.
She told TNW she had been handed a well-structured portfolio that focuses on the sustainable three-year business plan put together by Mango's exco team.
Commenting on challenges faced by the airline, she said: "The main challenge is the current distressed economic environment that we are facing, coupled with the fuel price volatility." She added that the current market is highly competitive, with pressure on margins.

"Mango is a cash-positive business and we will remain that going forward. Currently, Mango holds 30% market share on the routes we operate, and we would like to maintain and grow that share."
The airline's corporate plan includes the conclusion of interline agreements. "We would like to capitalise on Mango's increased domestic footprint through interline and code share relationships," she says, adding that Mango's capacity grew by 30% after SAA withdrew capacity from the market. ■

TNW Founding Editors:
John H Marsh (1914-1996) Leona Marsh (1923-2003)

EDITORIAL
Editor: Tessa Reed tessar@nowmedia.co.za
Features Editor: Sue van Winsen suev@nowmedia.co.za
Journalists:
Savannah Freemantle Sarah Robertson
Photographer: Shannon Van Zyl
Production Editor: Ann Braun

PUBLISHER
Natasha Schmidt natashas@nowmedia.co.za

GROUP PUBLISHER
David Marsh davem@nowmedia.co.za

ADVERTISING
Sales: Natasha Schmidt natashas@nowmedia.co.za
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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BSP collapses in Zimbabwe

SARAH ROBERTSON

DUE to worsening conditions relating to foreign currency repatriation in Zimbabwe, airlines have started preventing Zimbabwean agents from issuing cash tickets through BSP or those paid for with local credit cards.

Janet Tsoka, travel manager for Traverze Travel in Harare, said the bulk of major carriers – including BA, Kenya Airways and Emirates – exited BSP Zimbabwe in the last three weeks. She added that agents could only issue tickets on SAA, RwandAir, Air Zimbabwe and fastjet now.

BA operated by Comair advised: “Effective immediately, the ticketing authority for all agents in Zimbabwe will be limited to credit card only through the BSP system. All tickets issued on 125 paper are included in this directive, regardless of the carrier.”

Helena Maxwell, area manager Southern and Central Africa for Kenya Airways, said that tickets bought in hard currency or with international credit cards could still be issued. She urged local agents to lobby government to prioritise airlines for the repatriation of funds.

Janet said BSP sales spiked during October because of panicked

Zimbabweans purchasing their 2019 tickets before shut down, but business has been dead quiet since.

“At present, we have to collect US dollars in cash from clients and take it to the local airline office. This is forcing clients to purchase forex through the black market. Local credit cards aren’t permitted either, but international cards do still

work,” she said.

An IATA spokesperson said as of September 30, carrier revenues awaiting clearance in the country totalled \$149 million. He said that IATA has been actively engaging with the government since 2016 to prioritise repatriating funds for aviation. He added that the government had committed to continue to work with IATA and airlines to find solutions to

overcome these challenges.

Moreover, he said that while discussions are ongoing, IATA continues to fully operate the BSP as mandated by the airlines.

Ignatius Matungamire, chairman of the Association of Zimbabwean Travel Agents, was optimistic that a solution would be found in the form of moving BSP Zimbabwe over to a dollar-based payment system in the near future. ■



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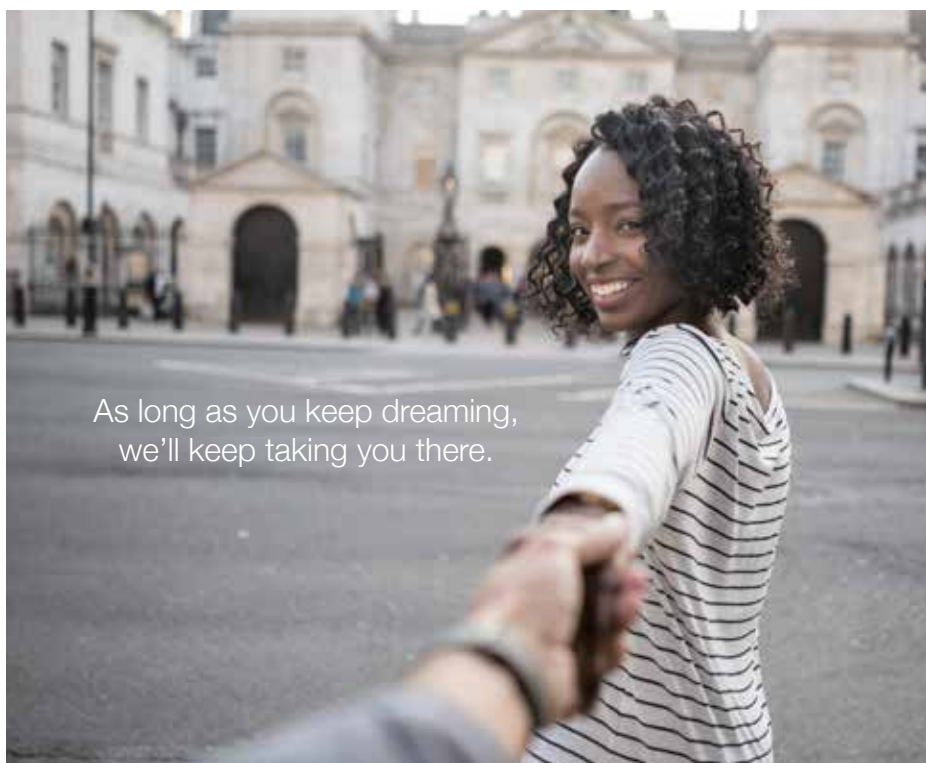
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Changing lives

Travel Assignment Group (TAG) recently held its ninth annual fundraiser at Levelthree Premium Venue, Sandton. Travel packages were auctioned off and all proceeds raised from the auction, (and entry tickets) will finance the education of worthy candidates at King Edward VII School. Pictured (from left): Irene Van Aswegen, strategic key accounts manager; Jonathan Gerber, md; Kim Parker, head of sales; and Adele Dreyer, salesperson. Photo by Savannah Freemantle



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Work hard, play hard!

This year's Club Travel supplier workshops in Jo'burg and Cape Town were funfair themed. **Wally Gaynor**, md of the consortium, shared his review of 2018 with *TNW's* Sarah Robertson at the Jo'burg leg.

CLUB Travel's 2018 Fun Fair recently took place in Johannesburg and Cape Town, with 300 Gauteng-based agents and ITCs attending the Johannesburg leg and over 200 attending the Cape Town leg. Gin, beer and wine flowed freely along with paella, sushi, Balkan burgers and ice-cream market day treats, while suppliers hosted branded stalls in the market booths. Md for Club Travel, **Wally Gaynor**, explains that this annual event is essential to ensure that suppliers are able to interact with franchise consultants and ITCs, while having a lot of fun at the same time.

Wally told *TNW* that because 2018 had been a difficult year economically, Club Travel's team had to work and play extra hard to achieve the growth they had managed. He said that the consortium had grown across the board in its corporate, leisure, ITC

and franchising departments.

He said that Club Travel is currently consolidating its leisure offering and will be relaunching as an online brand in January. The consortium has traditionally always had a bricks-and-mortar focus, but Wally says this will change in the New Year. Club's new leisure brand will specialise in online packages, although Wally wouldn't give away details, saying only that it was good news for all members of the Club consortium including ITCs, as the renewed leisure focus would provide access to more products and deals.

Franchising has also shown growth, both with gains in market share and new entrants joining the group. Club Travel attributes this to the affordable cost structure of its ITC and franchise offering and to its policy of not tying ITCs down. Wally explained that Club gives 100% of upfront land sale commissions back to ITCs.

Travel by Investec is another Club brand that is doing well. Wally advised that growth had been driven by service excellence, saying that some of the best consultants in the industry worked for this brand. It has been running for 10 years now.

Wally foresees a lot more change for the travel industry in the future. He says there are a lot of overseas players eyeing the South African outbound travel market and that new global entrants will lead to further consolidation of lata agents locally. He adds that lata's current tightening of payment rules would speed up the demise of a lot of smaller independent agents and that more and more players would opt for centralised ticketing through consortia head offices. Wally said that Club is also entering into discussions with their competition on cooperative ways to manage future industry threats together.



"Put your hands in the air," says gunslinger Jessica Hosain, Club Travel ITC Accounts



Face-paint prettiness – Anathi Ndzamela and Sisanda Nakase, travel consultants at Click and Travel



Wally rides the bull at the Cape Town leg of the Club Travel Fun Fair.

Club focuses on government account acquisition

CLUB Travel is capitalising on government travel account acquisition – a strategy that the company has been pursuing aggressively this past year.

Wally said that while Club Travel had previously managed a few smaller government accounts this had not accounted for a large percentage of their sales revenue until they won the Department of Rural and Land Affairs account at the beginning of this year. He said that it had been difficult to get exact travel figures when one took over government travel accounts but that this particular account had exceeded

their forecasted sales expectations.

Wally said that Club's status as a BBEE level 1 company was a great advantage to acquiring public sector accounts, adding that it was virtually impossible to do business with government now without this.

Additionally, Wally said that Club has seen a great improvement in the timeliness of government payments saying that it was not a bad payer if you gave each department what they wanted from the start.

Club Travel is currently bidding for another three government accounts at present, which they hope to acquire. ■



Cheers! Pictured from left are: Helen Havemann, Grethe Loubser, Henriette Botes and Sulene McKnight, all from HTH Travel.



Irshaad Yasseen and Salome van Heerden, business development managers of Cruises International enjoy Day of the Dead festivities. Photos: Sarah Robertson and Club Travel



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Air Mauritius cancels Wuhan service

AIR Mauritius has cancelled its weekly service to Wuhan, China, after launching the route on August 11.

Air Mauritius sales and marketing manager for South Africa, **Wouter Nel**,

says the Wuhan service was cancelled due to route rationalisation.

Passengers with existing bookings will be rerouted on other carriers. Agents are advised to contact Air Mauritius for rerouting. ■

For the record

In last week's issue of *TNW*, we incorrectly spelled **Lina da Costa's** (Bidvest Car Rental) name in the Thirsty's report. *TNW* apologises for the error.

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More London departures!

Virgin Atlantic has launched a second daily service between Johannesburg and London Heathrow, adding 188 000 seats annually. Pictured at the launch (from left): **Darrin Thomas**, Virgin Atlantic marketing and communications manager South Africa; **Vera Jackson** South Africa Virgin Clubhouse manager; **Sir Richard Branson**, founder of Virgin Group; **Liezl Gericke**, Virgin Atlantic head of Middle East and Africa; **Lee Raskinen**, Virgin Atlantic marketing and communications executive; and **Montez Meyer**, Virgin Atlantic Clubhouse agent.

Close down SAA, says Tito

TESSA REED

FINANCE minister **Tito Mboweni** has suggested it's time to shutdown SAA.

Speaking at an investor conference in New York at the beginning of the month, he said: " [SAA is] loss-making. We are unlikely to sort out the situation, so my view would be close it down."

The minister's comments come shortly after he announced that SAA and SA Express will receive R5bn and R1,2bn respectively in additional funding.

According to an industry source, while SAA used

to enjoy a 75% market share internationally and domestically, over the last 21 years, this has shrunk to about 20%. Last year, SAA transferred a number of its domestic routes to Mango and this year, the carrier cut back on several regional routes.

Adding weight to the finance minister's view, is the market's quick reaction to SAA's withdrawals, which suggests air access will not suffer without SAA.

Shortly after SAA announced a decrease in frequencies on its London route, Virgin Atlantic announced it would

introduce a double daily on the route.

Airlink has also applied for licences to operate flights to a number of regional routes on which SAA has cut back. These include Abuja, Libreville, Douala, Luanda, Gabon, Kigali, Brazzaville, Moroni and Cotonou and they have been approved by the South African Air Licensing Council. Airlink is hoping to launch operations to some of these destinations in February.

SA Express' grounding was similarly quickly followed by carriers picking up SA Express routes – notably Airlink and CemAir. ■

Enhancements coming to XL platform

TESSA REED

TRAVOLUTION, XL's integrated booking system including an agent platform, will be further developed towards the end of the year, while big changes are planned for next year.

The system has been developed with NDC direct connect capabilities, allowing agents to view NDC content alongside traditional GDS content in one workflow.

Philipp Wellstein, ceo of Welltravel, which has developed the platform together with XL and other clients in Europe and Asia, shared some of what's in store for the platform at the recent XL Travel conference, Beyond Xlence.

According to Philipp, during the last quarter of this year and the first quarter of 2019, a slew of upgrades to the platform will be rolled out. These include automated changes and refunds,

upgrades to the mobile app, the introduction of live chat as well as sales prompts.

Auto changes and refunds will be rolled out for GDS bookings and direct connects, enabling agents to make changes and refunds without having to work out change fees and fare differences, also avoiding ADMs because the system makes the calculation. Travellers will also be able to make changes to their own bookings and request applicable refunds.


Upgrades to the mobile app include the ability for agents and their clients to search for and book flights, accommodation and car rental. Agents can customise which suppliers they want to have available on this search-and-book function for their clients.

Live chat and notifications will also be enabled on the platform and mobile app, allowing agents to chat

internally as well as with their clients. Document sharing will also be supported by the chat functionality. Agents will get notifications, including when a booking is taking place, when travellers are about to board a flight, or when a client's passport is about to expire.

To encourage upselling and cross-selling, automated prompts to agents will be introduced, to suggest that they offer insurance, car rental, or visa services. Philipp emphasised that agents might forget these services and miss out on revenue.

In a year's time, Philipp said he would like to see the platform enable "predictive quotations", using big data analytics to allow agents to dynamically package itineraries customised to a particular client's interests, based on previous bookings. To achieve this, he urged agents to make use of the platform so that it could collect traveller data. ■



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
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AGENT REPORT



The Rektoratskirche St. Karl Borromäus church in Vienna.

The wonders of the Danube

In May this year, **Samantha Du Preez**, assistant team leader at Cruiseabout Dainfern, recently went on the seven-night Blue Danube Discovery Cruise with Avalon Waterways. She shares her experience below.

WOW, where to begin? This was a once-in-a-lifetime experience that I will always remember. When the call came informing me that I had received the opportunity to experience a river cruise – and not just any river cruise, but a cruise with Avalon Waterways – I couldn't believe what I was hearing.

I had no idea what the trip would have in store, but I couldn't wait to find out. While as an agent I have often shared in the excitement my clients experience before a holiday, being in their shoes was more thrilling than I had previously imagined. I was so shocked that the reality of the holiday only hit me when I was sitting on the aircraft about to take off.

The first stop on our itinerary was the vibrant city of Budapest, a real highlight, filled with diverse people. Our next stop was Vienna, which was chillier, but perfect for outdoor activities such as walks and bicycle rides in between exploring the quaint coffee shops and restaurants that offer local culinary experiences. We then travelled up the Danube all the way to Nuremberg where we spent



Fisherman's Bastion in Budapest.

history, before hopping on a coach to Prague.

While the strange names of the small towns along the Danube were at first odd and confusing, experiencing them in person brought their unique characteristics to life and showcased their beauty.

Adding to this experience was the on-board freedom provided by Avalon. I was surprised to find that the cruise did not feel stiff. We could choose if we wanted to participate in the scheduled on-shore excursions or if we wanted to venture off on our own.

One of the towns we visited was Dürnstein, a place where only 900 people live. Melk has one of the most magnificent

me with the sheer height of the floods it has recovered from in the past. Regensburg was one of my favourites: there I indulged in the local cuisine, experiencing authentic dishes that made use of sausage and sauerkraut.

The on-board service was noteworthy. I was one of the guilty ones who overindulged on the food and the 'killer' cookies provided at the coffee station. The cabins were spacious, with the panoramic window that is a big selling point for Avalon. One of the experiences I had particularly looked forward to was going through the locks on the river, and I was not disappointed.

The biggest highlight of this educational was the beautiful scenery we passed each day. The agents had a blast and the trip definitely left a lasting impression! The staff on board the *Avalon Expression* will never forget this crazy bunch. Likewise, travelling up the Danube is definitely an unforgettable experience. I am so grateful to have experienced this picture-perfect holiday. ■



Avalon Expression on the Danube in Wachau, Austria.

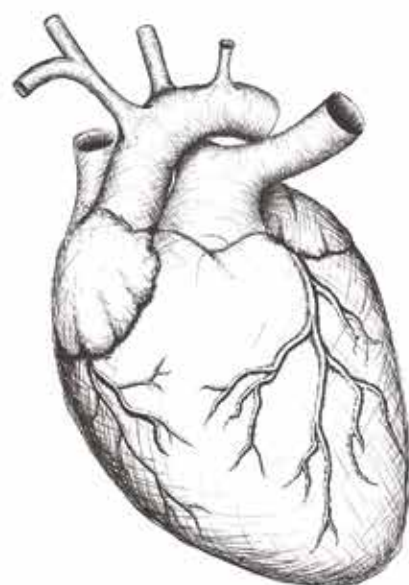
Photos: Avalon Waterways

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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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Agent Training & Recruitment



The skills agents learn during their initial training and early days of their career can play a major role in their future success – particularly when it comes to learning how to secure a sale. Sue van Winsen reports.

Addressing the sales gap

CURRENT travel curricula are falling short when it comes to equipping students with the requisite sales skills that are likely to set them apart during their careers.

While there are a number of functional focus areas that educational institutions need to cover, industry stakeholders agree that a disproportionate weight is placed on these skills over sales training.

Ceo of Asata, **Otto de Vries**, says: “Apart from the general travel and tourism modules, emphasis seems to be around fares and ticketing, GDS operations and travel reservations. Selling skills seem to be either left to

the future employer, or the consultant has to do selling skills training courses in addition to the degrees and/or diplomas they would have completed.”

Despite this lack of emphasis on sales skills, it is one of the key abilities employers look for when hiring new consultants. **Sam van Gool**, Peopleworks gm for Flight Centre Travel Group (FCTG), says: “At FCTG, we generally hire on potential and not necessarily on skill, however, as part of our minimum criteria, we do prefer that people have either sales or customer service skills.

It’s not just retail consultants that need to acquire sales

skills to get ahead. **Tammy Hunt**, md of eTravel, says in the ITC environment, sales skills are hugely beneficial. “The ITC is the travel professional, but also the person who has the relationship with the client, so they need to be able to have difficult conversations with clients at times, and hence, some form of sales is important.” Tammy adds that eTravel can guide and provide ITCs with the relevant information and also assist with these aspects to give consultants the edge.

More to selling

Sam adds that selling is not only about making the sale,

but also about being an expert in product knowledge, building customer relationships, supplier relationships, as well as time management. “Although we do train our people on these skills, prior experience and a proven track record is beneficial,” she adds.

Michelle Bullmore, marketing executive at Travel Counsellors also says that a proven track record that showcases great sales skills, and a flair for sales, are natural attributes the company looks for when recruiting new Travel Counsellors.

“However, it should never be about simply ‘selling’ to the customer. We look for the best

travel managers that will take the time to get to know their customers well,” she adds. “This means they can choose the best travel options and make the most appropriate recommendations for their customer, with the desire to offer ‘wow’ experiences. At any stage in a consultant’s career, building trust with customers, being able to think outside the box, and truly caring about the service they provide will not only ensure that customers enjoy seamless travel booking and itineraries, but offers the potential for increased earnings for the travel manager – a happy client will result in business and referrals,” says Michelle.”

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TRAVEL Training Academy

Suppliers step in to upskill

It’s not just agency heads that are responsible for improving the sales skills of consultants. Suppliers have a very important role to play too, says **Joanne Visagie**, sales and marketing manager for Beachcomber Tours.

“We entrust our brand with retail travel agents across SA and with that trust comes an accountability from their side too,” she says. “We encourage them to press into and ask us for assistance and advice, and we encourage them to use the resources we make available to them.”

These resources, range from Beachcomber’s travel agent portal and experienced reservations team, along with training that covers various skills such as ‘how to close the deal’ and ‘which resort for which person’.

Joanne points out that

a key ingredient of sales success is confidence – valuing your expertise and sharpening your skills all the time. “Approaching things with an air of expectation and confidence, demonstrating value with passion, selling something bigger than the product and building a relationship sharing what will be the client’s best holiday yet, are some of the skills agents should be focusing on.

“Pay attention to the customer psychology and go the extra mile by sharing your own experiences,” adds Joanne.

Finally, she says: “Apply your ability to listen, show empathy to their needs and have a hunger to be their go-to person with confidence, enthusiasm and resilience – don’t let them try do it themselves – let them know you are the expert.”



Time for travel mentors to step up

WITH so many seasoned professionals in the travel industry, there is an opportunity for senior leaders to come together and offer guidance to those just beginning their travel career.

Indeed, many in the industry agree that mentorship programmes could play a far larger role in skills development.

Otto de Vries of Asata says: "Considering how dynamic the travel industry is, it would be valuable for consultants to be mentored by seasoned travel managers or senior consultants."

Echoing his sentiments is **Sam van Gool** of Flight Centre Travel Group, who says mentorship programmes are key to skills development. "A mentor's role is to nurture and guide a person to unleash their full potential."

Despite the common understanding that mentorship programmes could be of value, there seems to be very little formalised activity in this regard. Otto says that he is not aware of any specific mentorship programmes, but adds that some TMCs do offer learnership and internship programmes that offer practical work experience within the organisation. "This often includes an element of mentorship when they shadow experienced people during the programme," he says.

At Flight Centre, Sam explains that theory is learnt through classroom interaction with facilitators, cemented through self-development on the company's e-learning platform, and then practiced through on-the-job learning

where the mentor plays a crucial role.

"At FCTG, we hire new people based on potential and not necessarily on industry knowledge or skill. In our environment, having great mentors is therefore crucial. The best learning and direction, therefore, comes from on-the-job mentoring and coaching. Mentoring and coaching is one of the competencies we expect of every leader within the business," she adds.

Robyn Christie, owner of Just Saying, agrees that there is a need for mentorship programmes in travel, but adds that rivalry between various companies has been a barrier in establishing a formalised programme. "The industry is fiercely competitive so it poses a problem when there is a cross-pollination of mentorship between brands. There will be a reluctance to share as openly as may be needed, and of course the threat of mentees being poached."

And while specific TMC programmes do have value, they are not true mentorship programmes, says Robyn. "Mentoring is not always only about skills development, although it is a good place to be able to identify a lack of skill and suggest the necessary development."

"Mentoring is really about an organic relationship forged between two people. It is for this reason that it is often not successful when formally assigned within an organisation. However, having a coach assigned to assist an individual in finding their way through an organisation does work, but the focus is more often on systems, processes and procedures," she adds.

Lending support along the way

WHEN launching an ITC business, agents are likely to face a number of unexpected challenges, which is why Travel Counsellors has put such a major focus on mentorship-type programmes for its new recruits.

Michelle Bullmore of Travel Counsellors, explains that this starts with a five-day induction course at the head office in Cape Town. "After returning home to launch and manage their own travel business, every Travel Counsellor has access to a global support team comprising over 400 travel, operations, marketing and business development specialists

at the click of a button."

New Travel Counsellors also join a 12-week 'new starter programme', which ensures new business owners can hit the ground running, by identifying current and potential clients already in their personal and professional networks, with access to the marketing and sales tools to approach clients effectively. This is complemented by the company's in-house broadcast programme, TCTV, which features the company's news and views.

Speaking specifically about mentorship programmes, Michelle says every Travel Counsellor has access

to a dedicated business development coach, whose focus is to ensure that the company's business owners can call upon one-to-one support, participate in online webinars, or enjoy face-to-face, classroom-style training at Travel Counsellors' Cape Town headquarters, or at 'TC on Tour' venues across the country.

"A dedicated corporate travel manager ensures that each Travel Counsellor is supported in the management of corporate client accounts, pitching for prospective new business and has direct access to airline, accommodation, transfer and MICE partners," she adds.



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Academy puts focus on improving soft skills

THE Travel Training Academy is the brainchild of **Helena de Nobrega**, md of Travel By Arrangement, who has 30 years' experience in the industry.

"I saw a gap in soft skills training as there were no institutions offering this – most institutions were based on technical skills," she explains.

"The need is to uplift and encourage further learning in the travel industry so that businesses can keep up with the fast-paced, changing travel business we know today."

Together with **Natalie Swart**, Helena has developed new course material on topics such as 'The Art of Consulting', 'Dynamic Packaging', and 'The Art of Sales'.

Helena describes the importance of the Academy by saying:

"Today's customers are well-travelled, tech-savvy, and know what they want – and they want it now! Travel professionals are often not skilled enough in terms of product or sales knowledge to meet customers' expectations. In the past we were mere order takers, and today's travel professionals need to know more than the traveller, how to advise the traveller and how to add value to his or her trip. All this is based on soft skills training, looking at the professional attributes, building on their strengths and more. This delivers return on investment for the company through increased sales, customer loyalty and higher client retention."

The Travel Training Academy is accredited by Cathseta for the

Certificate in General Travel, but Helena says she believes new courses need to be developed in order to meet the needs of the travel industry.

"The Art of Consulting course, for example, looks at the ever-changing role of the travel professional, focusing on the individual's attributes, emotional intelligence (EQ), relationship skills, and most importantly sales."

"We believe that focusing on the human element when training is key to the success of our courses. It is important to run face-to-face training for most of our courses, to obtain more value for the learner and return on investment for the employer. We will be introducing webinars in 2019," she concludes.

Travel Counsellors rolls out sustainable training

TRAVEL Counsellors has launched a new sustainable travel initiative which enables its corporate and leisure travel business owners to complete bespoke training and boost their green credentials.



Steve Byrne

The new online training course, which has been made for Travel Counsellors with the support of the global charity, the Travel Foundation, will be accessible to agents in seven countries, including South Africa.

Ceo, **Steve Byrne**, said this was a significant first step. "Sustainable tourism is something the company is investing in both emotionally and financially, and we are glad to have the experts at the Travel Foundation to guide us. We want our Travel Counsellors to feel empowered, with tools, training and knowledge, to build their own sustainable tourism

businesses."

He added: "It's something we know our global network of Travel Counsellors franchisees and their customers really care about. A recent survey of Travel Counsellors revealed that over 60% felt giving back

was extremely important to them and the same interests have been reflected in our customer groups too, across both corporate and leisure markets."

The 'Go Greener' online training course features guidelines on reducing water, waste and energy for the company's Travel Counsellors and office-based support teams, as well as hints and tips on how to make the most sustainable purchases – from food to clothing and souvenirs. It also features an action planning template so that those who complete the course can put learning into action.

News Flash

Travelinfo has updated its ADM workshop to include updates and changes from Iata's ADM User Group. These include "Best Practices" for ADM policy and "General ADM Process." The workshop has already attracted more than 1 200 participants with nearly 900 agents passing with distinctions. The workshop is available to Travelinfo Plus subscribers only. For access to the workshop email loullag@nowmedia.co.za

Did you know?

Flight Centre Travel Group's 2018 learnership programme recently came to an end, but the company employed 80% of the people on the programme. In addition, Flight Centre Business School has rolled out its new leadership programme, with 39 participants. The group is currently renovating its building and part of this is the addition of upgraded training and recruitment facilities. ■



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In travel, will golf

On October 31, the trade participated in the Travel Industry Golf Club (TIGC), hosted at Glendower Golf Club, and sponsored by Bidvest Car Rental (BCR). 124 people attended. Pictured from left: **Lina Da Costa**, BCR regional sales manager for travel; **Dalene Cilliers**, TIGC Secretary; and **Kirsten Laing**, BCR, sales co-ordinator.



Hello, Ireland!

G Adventures and British Airways recently hosted top-performing Flight Centre agents on a trip to Ireland. Pictured from left (back): **Odette Fourie**, FC Kolonnad; **Sarah O'Mahony**, G Adventures sales representative; **Cathryn McEwan**, FC Walmer Park; **Lori Bernstein**, FC Nicolway; **Ferdi Bornman**, FC Menlyn; **Jessica Roque**, FC Eastgate; **Natalie Viljoen**, FC Fourways; **Cerileigh Dixie**, FC La Lucia; and **Judith Mokagane**, FC Woodmead and (foreground): **Mike Hutchinson**, G Adventures ceo; **Sylvia Pomeranetz**, BA and Iberia sales manager trade.

BA launches DUR-LHR direct



The trade recently gathered at The Oyster Box hotel to celebrate the launch of British Airways' first direct flights to Durban. Pictured (from left): **Jane Bergset**, Club Travel and **Helen Busse**, Dynamic Holidays.

Obituary

■ On November 4, **Carlo Folchi-Vici** passed away after a battle with cancer. He leaves behind many friends and family, all of whom have a story to tell of the many adventures with him whether in his personal or professional life. Carlo



Carlo Folchi-Vici

was the Sales and Marketing Manager for the Zulu Nyala Group and travelled throughout the world promoting the hotels. He was well loved and respected by all that knew him and will be sorely missed by all those that had the privilege of knowing him, industry friends say.

Appointments

■ **Nellita Scholtz** recently joined Aviareps Southern Africa as Air Namibia national sales and marketing manager. Nellita was previously an account manager at Delta Air Lines.



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WebBeds latest acquisition

From page 1

over 28 500 hotels. DOTW has a particular strength in the Asia Pacific market, which is a key strategic focus for WebBeds, Webjet said in a statement. It added

that the acquisition would deliver a number of contracts into the Americas region, while further expanding WebBeds' presence in the European and MEA regions. ■

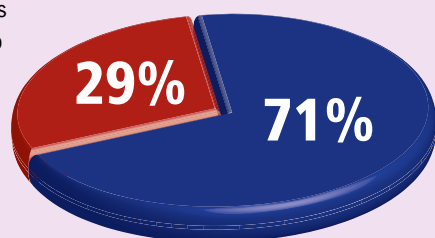
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Will eased visa rules for China see a flood of travellers from SA?

The South African government signed a visa agreement with China. It has also been confirmed that SA will ease visa requirements for Chinese travellers. The reciprocal agreement will see both South Africans and Chinese travellers requiring one visa, valid for five years with multiple entries allowed for up to 90 days each time.

- Yes
- No



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Sales Bonanza

Legacy Hotels and Resorts are offering promotional agent rates at select Sandton hotels for bookings from August 1 to December 31. The rates apply to select rooms at the Michelangelo Hotel and the DaVinci Hotel and Suites. The net rates on offer are contracted rates and best available rates are on offer at all other Legacy Hotels & Resorts on request. All preferred rates are subject to availability and may not apply during high demand. Pictured: Hara Jackson, group sales manager at Legacy Hotels and Resorts and Peet Grobbelaar, deputy general manager at The Michelangelo Hotel. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl



Wally announces retirement

SARAH ROBERTSON

INDOMITABLE md for the Club Travel Group, **Wally Gaynor** has confirmed that he plans to retire at the end of next year.

As the second largest shareholder for the Club Travel group, after BEE partner Thebe Investment Corporation, Wally plans to stay involved with Club Travel after his retirement



Wally Gaynor

and to remain on the board of directors, but says that much of this work will be done remotely in the future.

Wally's plans are to continue travelling the world. He says that in his youth he travelled South and

Central America on the chicken busses, but this time around he intends to base himself at the place he owns in Brazil and to revisit

these countries in a slightly more upmarket campervan.

Wally quips that he is such a disruptive force in the office that his team will probably be more productive with him working remotely, but there are still a lot of changes that he plans to implement at Club Travel before retirement, including putting a succession plan in place.

He says that while nothing has been finalised in this regard, it was possible that Thebe may ultimately buy out his Club Travel shares. ■

Maldives' flights take a detour

From page 1

this reschedule as it opened the way for ongoing weekly flights due to easier crew rotations and in order to ensure better ground handling in the Maldives.

"The current flying time is seven and a half hours with a one hour refuelling stop in Mauritius during which

passengers will remain on the flight. The alternative route to the Maldives is approximately 16 hours in length," said Daphne.

She added that any passenger who did not accept the new scheduling would be entitled to request a refund.

Daphne added that it was

unlikely that there would be any further changes to the schedules and said that there was a hope from the Maldives Tourism board and SAA that this route would open up permanently for South Africans. She said that the relevant parties were currently in discussions around this. ■

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