

B2B Travel Marketing Matures via Data Exchange & Self-Service Booking

A White Paper on Media Transition – Spring 2014

In 1978, the firm we started to serve travel industry publishers began building travel reference databases with our 1st mini-computer -- 4 years before the IBM PC was introduced. Workstations were networked by 1982, creating ability to **exchange data** between our team and our publishers mainframe computers. Over time, we used the Internet to **exchange data** between our offices here in the U.S. Today CERN scientists, when in their home countries, remotely access their research on particle accelerators across the globe via securely encrypted protocols. A lot has happened with computers in the last 40 years. But the Internet and the World Wide Web always evolved to **exchange data!**

When we launched the 1st website serving the travel professional B2B market in 1996, TRIPinfo.com was alone in the segment for more than a year. Back then marketers employed their long-established pattern of trade shows and their accompanying B2B magazine ads. Results were measured by the success of their Brands. By 1998, the 3 largest B2B travel magazines (all 50+ years older) followed TRIPinfo.com, launching their websites. The 4 sites remained alone in the segment for more than another half decade...

[10 Ways Marketing Has Changed Forever](#)

By the mid-2000s, B2B magazine readership began declining and B2B travel magazines realized the need to create websites as well. Consumer magazines were already shifting audiences online. In a scramble to play catch-up, these B2B magazines began to join an already maturing B2B online media market. They continued focus on their trade shows and print magazines, giving bonus placements on their websites. Advertisers went along with B2B marketing tradition, but began shifting *consumer* ad dollars online.

[Online Ad Spending to Surpass Print in 2012](#)

Consider the common denominator of B2B travel professionals that book 25% of all the dollars spent in the industry. Group + Tour + Agent + Small Meeting + Event + Religious + Reunion + Student + Sports + Wedding + International group planners are left brain, detail and logistics oriented. Travel Pros methodically bring a disparate group of people together to the same place, at the same time, to share the same itinerary! *Full disclosure: I know. In recent years I have planned 14 reunions of 1,200+ person visits, with expenditures exceeding \$600,000.* [5 Things to Know About Audience Targeting](#)

Imagine the spending power of 30,000+ travel professionals/month planning volume bookings every week for a living...not just a few times per year! Earning their trust, building your Brand as a destination, attraction, or lodging to book their group, is not measured in the same way as consumer marketing. To experience growth in volume bookings, focus on building *Brand*, in an environment that has already achieved *Trust!* Let the B2B travel planner self-select and self-target their interest in your message. [See and Be Seen](#)

To provide TRIPinfo.com's loyal travel professionals the **self-service** booking they now seek for groups, we carefully monitored online group booking software that has evolved for both attractions & lodging. In 2013 we created Alliances with the fastest growing & most affordable online group booking software for Attractions. We also integrated the global leading online group booking software for Lodging. Today TRIPinfo.com leads travel B2B Websites in user *Engagement*, **exchange data** & **self-service** booking.

In summary, over a period of 18+ years, marketing to B2B travel professionals has greatly matured. It's not efficiently achieved at the same old trade shows with their accompanying magazine ads. It's not efficiently achieved using a *Push* consumer media strategy. It's all about non-intrusive *Branding* in a *Trusted* medium, to a Self-Selected, Self-Targeted travel professional -- within the right *Context* when that travel pro is undertaking the disciplined *Behavior* of making selections for planning their group bookings.

[Conversions, Not Clicks, Key to Display Ads](#)

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Mark holds a Degree in Marketing from Vanderbilt University and has 35+ years experience in marketing. After 15 years with leading travel publishers, Mark launched TRIP in print in 1993 and TRIPinfo.com in 1996 as the 1st website for travel pros. He has been immersed in online travel marketing ever since.