

Oneworld drops interline requirement for travel on separate reservations

Inside this issue:

Europcar Group acquires Bluemove, aims to lead 'urban mobility' sector	2
Direct Travel continues its shopping spree	2
U.K.'s CAA to investigate transparency of airline fees	3
What is driving the spike in cash transactions of airline tickets?	4
PROS adds new capabilities to its cloud-based RMS	6
In Focus: Zumata harnesses the power of artificial intelligence	7
World news briefing	10

The Oneworld alliance is no longer requiring its member airlines to interline with each other if a passenger is traveling on separate PNRs.

For passengers, the change means that they cannot check bags through to their final destinations if their travel on two member airlines was booked and ticketed separately.

It also means that member airlines are not required to protect passengers who miss their connections if they are not traveling on a single PNR.

The airlines will continue to offer through bag checking and reaccommodation of passengers whose travel is disrupted when the segments are booked together.

The new policy states that "all member airlines are expected to check in pas-

sengers and their baggage to their ultimate destination on multi-sector journeys across the Oneworld network, wherever possible, when all sectors are ticketed under the same booking/PNR."

For example, if a passenger is flying from Sydney to Singapore on Qantas and from Singapore to London on British Airways on a single PNR, Qantas will tag the bags for London and British Airways will accept the bags.

But if the two flights are booked on separate PNRs, the passenger must collect the bag in Singapore and recheck it with British Airways.

If the Qantas flight is disrupted and a passenger misses the connection on British Airways, BA is not required to reaccommodate the passenger.

(Continued on page 5)

In This Corner

Brava, Expedia, for paying its women employees \$1 for every \$1 paid to men in equivalent roles. Just over half of Expedia Inc. employees in the U.S. are women, compared to 47% of the U.S. workforce in general.

Expedia notes that there is more work to be done: Women hold 33% of Expedia's manager-level positions. We are reminded of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg's statement that nine female justices would be "enough," because for more than two centuries nobody questioned the wisdom of a nine-man court.

Klein to step down as Sabre CEO at year end

Tom Klein, president and chief executive officer of Sabre Corp., said he will resign from Sabre and its board of directors, effective Dec. 31.

He will continue to serve as CEO while the board searches for his successor.

Sabre reaffirmed its previously announced full-year guidance and medium-term goals.

Klein, 53, became CEO in August 2013, replacing Sam Gilliland, who had

held the post for a decade.

Although Sabre said at the time that "the transition in CEO leadership from Sam to Tom has been a carefully orchestrated succession process, led by Sam," Gilliland's departure was abrupt.

It occurred the day after he had been scheduled to talk with reporters about a new campaign. The event was canceled.

At the time, Sabre was rumored to be preparing for an initial public offer-

(Continued on page 5)

Travel Technology Update

Published every other Tuesday by
AMC Communications

International Inc.
P.O. Box 220432
Saint Louis, MO 63122-0432
(314) 965-2521

Editor and Publisher
Michele McDonald
mmcdonald@amc-comm.com

Subscriptions
AMC Communications
International, Inc.
P.O. Box 220432
Saint Louis, MO 63122-0432
(314) 965-2521
circulation@amc-comm.com

Annual subscription available in PDF format only by e-mail: \$450. Site licenses are available; for information, e-mail circulation@amc-comm.com. To pay by credit card (American Express, Discover, MasterCard or Visa), visit Air Transport World's website at atwonline.com.

For single copies, send a check for US\$30 to AMC Communications International Inc., P.O. Box 220432, Saint Louis, MO 63122-0432.

ISSN 1539-9257 Copyright ©2016
Reproduction by any means is strictly prohibited without the express permission of the publisher.

AMC

Communications International Inc.
Michele McDonald, president

Europcar Group acquires Bluemove, aims to lead 'urban mobility' sector

Europcar Group acquired Bluemove, a mobility technology start-up and car-sharing company based in Madrid.

The acquisition was made through Ubeeqo, the specialist in shared mobility solutions for businesses in which Europcar acquired a majority stake in January 2015.

It is part of Europcar's goal of becoming the European leader in urban mobility.

Europcar said Bluemove is the leading technology company in the Spanish car sharing market for individuals, providing 24-hour access to an available fleet through a dedicated app.

It has operated in Spain since 2011 and has a community of

47,000 registered customers.

It is currently available in Madrid, Seville and Malaga, and will be soon launched in Barcelona and Valencia.

It enjoys strategic agreements with private and public entities in all cities where it operates, such as the Regional Transport Consortium of Madrid.

Meanwhile, Ubeeqo is currently deploying its multimodal platform, which offers a "seamless book-and-pay experience" to customers, in France, Belgium and the U.K.

It will soon launch in Germany and, through Bluemove, in Spain.

Last month, Europcar acquired Locaraise, a French car rental company with 19 locations.



Direct Travel continues its shopping spree

Direct Travel continued its rollup of travel agencies, acquiring Georgia International Travel, a corporate travel management company based in Atlanta.

In the last two years, it has acquired about a dozen agencies.

The company said it was looking to expand in the South and noted that Atlanta is a dominant U.S.

travel hub in a "vibrant" market.

Georgia International Travel has been in continuous operation since 1984.

In May 2006, it was acquired by Vela McClam-Mitchell, a long-time travel industry executive and a former senior vice president of travel supplier marketing and vice president of e-commerce at Worldspan.

TravelPerk raises \$7 million in Series A round

TravelPerk raised \$7 million in a Series A financing round led by Spark Capital with the participation of Sunstone, LocalGlobe and existing investors. It will use the funds

to hire more developers, product managers and designers.

The Barcelona-based company aims to provide a "consumer-grade experience" to business travelers.

U.K.'s CAA to investigate transparency of airline fees

The U.K.'s Civil Aviation Authority said it will launch an investigation into the transparency of airline fees.



Robert Goodwill

Robert Goodwill, the Minister of State for Transport, told Parliament that the government and the CAA continue to emphasize the importance of airlines' compliance with ticket transparency obligations.

Airlines must ensure that any administration fees and charges "are clear to passengers when they choose between airlines," he said.

Goodwill said the CAA will work with airlines on "unfair con-

tract terms" this summer.

"The work will include a review of the airlines' terms and conditions with the aim of ensuring the rights and obligations of the consumers and businesses are fair and balanced and consumers are not being penalized by unfair contract terms."

The issue of "hidden" airline fees has raged for years in the U.S., where airlines are required to post all charges for optional services on their websites.

That has not satisfied critics, however.

They continue to press the Transportation Department to require airlines to provide fee information to all sales channels, including GDSs.

Not surprisingly, the DOT has

repeatedly delayed a decision on the issue.

The CAA's announcement came a month after CaseHub, a website in the U.K. that solicits participation in class action lawsuits, began organizing a claim against Ryanair.

CaseHub believes that passengers who have paid Ryanair fees for checking in and/or printing a boarding pass at the airport or to correct a spelling error in the reservation should be entitled to refunds.

CaseHub claims that 5,208 Ryanair customers have joined the claim.

In a separate action, CaseHub is seeking refunds of air passenger duty taxes on flights that are missed or canceled.

Many U.K. passengers forgo compensation for flight delays

U.K. airline passengers who have flown within or from a European Union airport and were delayed more than three hours are leaving money on the table, according to research commissioned by money.co.uk, a website that compares financial products.

The research indicated that about 70% of passengers who have experienced such delays are unlikely to make a claim under EC regulation 261/2004, which entitles passengers to compensation for long delays.

A third of them were simply unaware that they could.

Among the passengers who filed claims, 73% went directly to the airline, and 71% of that group

was successful.

Most were paid by the airline without undue hassle, although a few airlines had to be nudged by the U.K.'s Civil Aviation Authority.

Another 27% of those who filed claims used a claims management or legal company, thereby forfeiting up to a third of the compensation they were due.

Among the 29% of passengers whose claims were denied by the airlines, one in 10 did not know how to escalate a case up to the CAA.

Another 6% said they "couldn't be bothered."

Money.co.uk believes that attitude may be due to misunderstandings about how much compensation

they would receive.

Many consumers believe they will receive a maximum of £150, but they could receive up to £460.

Money.co.uk said that when the unclaimed compensation is added up, the total is more than £112 million.

Iran Air cleared to resume flights to European Union

Most of Iran Air's fleet got the go-ahead to resume operations to the E.U. as the European Commission updated the E.U. Air Safety List. Also cleared are all airlines certified in Zambia; Air Madagascar, and Citilink, Lion Air and Batik Air, all based in Indonesia.

What is driving the spike in agencies' cash transactions?

Neither the Airlines Reporting Corp. nor the airlines seem to be able to account for a 16.13% spike in cash transactions in May.

The percentage of cash transactions tends to vary erratically, but a 16% increase is unusual, if not unprecedented.

Meanwhile, travel agency sales of airline transportation in the U.S. continued a trend that began about a year ago: declining sales against a backdrop of increasing transactions.

In other words, travel agencies are bringing in more money for the airlines but are working harder to do it.

Total sales for May were down 3.07%, while total transactions were up 9.73%.

The answer to that mathematical question is easy: Fares were down 3.95% overall, and domestic fares, which represent the lion's share of an agent's workload, were down 4.18%.

Average daily sales at ARC-accredited travel agency locations was \$17,985.52.

So far this year, the ARC settlement system has processed 2,260,579,557 flight segments.

ARC Processing Data, May 2016		
	May 2016	Percent change
Domestic fares	\$3,166,936,570	(4.18%)
International fares	\$2,970,148,954	(3.7%)
Total fares	\$6,137,085,525	(3.95%)
Airline fees	\$651,584,194	(2.77%)
Taxes and non-airline fees	\$899,967,046	2.61%
Total taxes and fees	\$1,551,551,240	0.28%
Credit card sales	\$6,875,455,135	(4.38%)
Cash sales	\$930,440,131	7.82%
Total sales*	\$7,805,895,266	(3.07%)
*Refund & exchange fees included	\$117,258,501	0.68%
Credit card transactions	12,451,181	8.79%
Cash transactions	1,967,884	16.13%
Total transactions	14,419,065	9.73%
EMD sales	\$3,351,374	187.84%
EMD transactions	47,963	336.9%
Domestic transactions	9,790,918	9.8%
International transactions	4,628,147	9.59%

Former attorney general opposes fingerprinting of Uber drivers

Former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder is opposing the use of fingerprinting in background checks for Uber drivers.

In letters to legislators in New Jersey and Chicago, Holder said that because of deficiencies in the FBI's database, fingerprint checks can prevent people from getting jobs even if they were never convicted of crimes. He said requiring fingerprint checks can discriminate against minorities.

Holder also said that the pur-

pose of the FBI's fingerprint database is to aid law enforcement during investigations, not to screen job applicants.

In a letter sent to Sen. Paul Sarlo, deputy majority leader of the New Jersey state senate, Holder wrote that the database "was not designed to be used to determine whether or not someone is eligible for a work opportunity. Relying on it for that purpose is both unwise and unfair."

Holder's law firm, Covington

& Burling, advises Uber on safety matters.

Uber asked Holder to write the letter to the lawmakers, according to a spokesman for the ride-hailing company.

Jason Sharenow, president of the Limousine Association of New Jersey, whose members are required to get fingerprint background checks, said he has not seen any category of driver or minority group discriminated against by fingerprinting requirements.

Klein to resign as Sabre chief at end of year

(Continued from page 1)
ing.

Gilliland's final years as CEO were marked by an antitrust lawsuit



Tom Klein

filed by American Airlines.

The case went to trial, and after five days of testimony revealing embarrassing e-mails and a cam-

paign "to take American down," Sabre settled on Oct. 31, 2012.

In the ensuing months, several senior-level executives who had been involved in the dispute with American quietly left the company.

In contrast, Klein's tenure has been relatively serene.

The company filed its IPO papers in early 2014, revealing years of financial losses.

But after it returned to the market the following April, it maintained a solid footing and has reported market share gains.

Klein began his current career 22 years ago in marketing and sales positions with American Airlines, which then, like Sabre, was a unit of AMR Corp.

He joined Sabre, leading a joint venture in Mexico, and went on to serve in a number of executive

Sabre CEO: 'I thought LH would back off'

Sabre chief Tom Klein admitted that he is "wrong sometimes," and he definitely didn't make the right call on Lufthansa's determination to maintain its GDS surcharge of €16 that it imposed in September.

"I thought they would back off," he told a Nasdaq investor conference in London.

"Lufthansa is correct that the airline has a lot of pressures," he said, including labor problems, low-cost carrier problems and problems with the Middle Eastern carriers.

"But their distribution strategy doesn't solve any of those problems," Klein said.

"At some point, when you have bad strategies, people retreat from them."

Oneworld changes interline policy for multiple PNRs

(Continued from page 1)

Although Oneworld confirmed the change with *TTU*, there is no formal announcement on its website, and what little information is available on carrier websites is mixed.

Cathay Pacific's CXAgents site says: "With effect from 01 Jun 2016, all oneworld carriers have agreed that through check-in will apply **ONLY** to passengers traveling on an oneworld itinerary ticketed on a single ticket or where segments are ticketed separately but in the same PNR record.

"To align with the change, disruption policy will also be revised to exclude protection for passengers holding separate tickets that is

not booked under the same PNR."

Qantas' website, on the other hand, says, "Your baggage will not be checked through and you will not receive your onward journey boarding pass if you hold two separate reservations

for your international trip, where one reservation is with Qantas and the other reservation is with an airline that is neither Qantas, Emirates or a oneworld airline."

But notices on other member carriers' websites are either hard to find or not present, and the news is being disseminated largely through

forums like FlyerTalk.

FlyerTalk members report that they are receiving conflicting information from Oneworld airlines.

One carrier told a traveler that the change was made due to "the new Altéa system."

However, the system – Amadeus' passenger services system – has been in place at several Oneworld carriers for years, and Amadeus said the alliance's policy change was "unrelated to Altéa."

Another carrier's agents told a traveler that they had received no word of the policy change.

Oneworld's new policy is in line with those adopted by the Star Alliance and SkyTeam several years ago.



PROS adds new capabilities to its cloud-based RMS

PROS added new features to all three components of RevenuePRO, its cloud-based revenue management solution for the airline industry.

The PROS Availability Server, a high-performance engine that provides airlines with real-time availability across all channels, now includes minimum availability capabilities that protect against revenue leaks:

Airlines can't always predict when travel agents book trips with the intent to cancel one or more of the segments.

PROS Availability Server prevents agents from bypassing availability controls by simulating and evaluating multiple origin and destination segments.

Availability Server also provides carriers with consistent availability across every selling channel.

Airlines can integrate with external

systems to provide their customers with real-time availability and guarantee their best offers at the time of purchase.

PROS O&D, a revenue optimization solution, is using data science-driven analytics to enable airlines to better forecast demand for each flight.

It also is now able to consider the connection airport when calculating daily fares for specific itineraries, providing demand and fare analysts with additional configurability.

PROS Group Sales Optimizer has a new capability that allows airline agents to cancel the booking with a single click.

It also has new configurable contract templates that can be used in conjunction with client-specific terms and conditions to generate the right contract for every group request.



IBM signs 10-year technology agreement with Emirates

IBM signed a 10-year technology services agreement with Emirates Airline worth approximately \$300 million.

IBM will provide IT infrastructure delivered as a service, aimed at improving efficiency on the airline's passenger support systems and functions.

The agreement provides fully managed services for the IBM mainframe and storage that will help Emirates encrypt data in near real-time.

The platform also allows the airline to build new apps that will support a commercial exchange of business functions, capabilities or competencies as services packaged in APIs.

Emirates has run its ticketing and reservations system on the IBM mainframe for more than 30 years.

IBM's zSystems is the foundation for all of the airline's mission-critical data and transactions.



Ryanair organizes its fares into three 'families'

Ryanair organized its fares into three fare families:

- Regular is the guaranteed lowest fare. It includes a free 10kg cabin bag and smaller second bag and a randomly allocated seat.

- Leisure Plus includes priority

boarding, an allocated seat and a 20kg checked bag.

- Business Plus offers fast-track security, priority boarding, a premium allocated seat, ticket changes within two days before or after scheduled departure and dedicated airport check-in.



Zumata harnesses the power of artificial intelligence

When it comes to hotels, there is no dearth of choice in most destinations of the world.

“There are 3,000 hotels in Rome,” Robert Meza, director of business development and strategic partnerships at Zumata Technologies, said.

Somewhere in that number is the perfect hotel for a family with a couple of kids who are looking forward to seeing the Coliseum and would get a kick out of a pizza-

In Focus

making excursion as well.

The boys are old enough for a room of their own, so their parents would like two adjoining rooms, and a pool would be great.

Mom goes to her favorite online travel agency, one that goes beyond the origin-destination-date formula. She types, “Find a hotel in Rome that is kid-friendly, has adjoining rooms and a pool and is near the fun sights. And a view of the city would be nice.”

In seconds, the OTA narrows the field to a few properties and delivers descriptions and photos.

Since the OTA “knows” the customer, it also suggests the hotels have spa facilities for Mom.

The brains behind the operation belong to Watson, IBM’s cognitive system (and “Jeopardy” champion).

Combing through a vast store of data and images from more than 60 hotel companies and aggregators, Watson can provide Zumata’s customers with very relevant an-

swers to travelers’ questions.

Zumata is a B2B company, chief executive officer Josh Ziegler said.

Its target customers include OTAs, traditional travel agencies, GDSs, loyalty companies and other travel companies.

Travelers don’t know the information is being served up by Watson. “They just think you’re a genius,” Ziegler said.

Zumata uses a combination of Watson APIs, including AlchemyLanguage, Visual Recognition and Retrieve & Rank, to deliver the most relevant results.

Watson, of course, does not know everything.

It even flubbed a few questions when it challenged the top two “Jeopardy” champions in 2011.

So it gauges its own confidence level before answering a question. If it is low — for example, if a traveler would like a restaurant reservation in the hotel’s vicinity — it will refer the query to a human.



It does, however, “learn,” and the Zumata team has “a ton of data that we train it with,” Ziegler said.

“We also use social media to add sentiment and feeling with each interaction.”

Another benefit for Zumata customers is “dynamic margining.”

If one hotel offers an override of 1%, but you can find a rate from another that offers you a 2% higher margin, you are better off booking



Josh Ziegler



Robert Meza

the lower rate instead of steering volume to the override.

While Zumata is well-suited to the leisure travel market, the company is also focusing on corporate travel.

In particular, Meza said, it believes it can take a lot of the pain out of using an online corporate booking tool.

“It can take an hour to look for things that are important, like whether a hotel is close to a metro station,” he said.

Zumata is based in Singapore, so it is in the thick of the fastest growing travel market in the world, Ziegler said.

But the greatest demand for its services is in North America, which is why Zumata is teaming up with DHISCO.

Toni Portmann, chief executive officer of DHISCO, notes that it’s an unusual arrangement, given that both are hospitality distribution companies.

But, she said, “taking this industry to the next level and staying competitive requires cooperation and industry alliances.

“That’s why this is so exciting,” she added. “Zumata leads the field in artificial intelligence, which is the future.”

On the Calendar

June 20-23: HITEC 2016; New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center; hftp.org/hitec.

June 22: HSMIAI Revenue Optimization Conference; New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center; hsmia.org.

July 16-20: GBTA Convention 2016; Colorado Convention Center, Denver; gbta.org/convention.

Aug. 31-Sept. 1: TravelDaily Conference: Embracing the New Era; Le Méridien She Shan Shanghai; summit.traveldaily.cn/tdc2016.

Sept. 20-22: New Generation of Airline Passenger Systems; Grand Connaught Rooms, London; flightglobalevents.com/tdc2016.

Oct. 6-7: Travel Distribution Summit North America; Palms Las Vegas; eyefortravel.com

Oct. 18-20: The Beat Live (subscribers only); InterContinental Chicago Magnificent Mile.

Oct. 18-20: IATA World Passenger Symposium; JW Marriott Marquis Dubai; iata.org/events/passenger-symposium.

Nov. 15-17: PhoCusWright Conference; JW Marriott L.A. Live, Los Angeles; phocuswrightconference.com

Dec. 1-2: Travel Loyalty China Summit; venue TBA, Shanghai; aviamatch.com.

Names in the news

Sabre Travel Network appointed **Todd Arthur** vice president of sales and market development for the Asia-Pacific region. He was managing director, Asia Pacific, for HRS. **Daver Ka Fai Lau** was named regional director for North Asia. He was general manager for Amadeus Taiwan Ltd.



Daver Ka Fai Lau

Amadeus appointed **Clare de Bono** head of product and innovation for the U.K. and Ireland, responsible for large-scale initiatives. She was general manager of global air solutions at STA Travel Group.



Clare de Bono



Amanda Kotenko was named head of U.K. account management. She was vice president of account development, global client group. global corporate services, American Express.

Marc Jacobsen was named principal implementation manager at Sabre Hospitality Solutions. He was director of product at Totom, a travel startup.

Travelport named **Kelly Kolb**



Todd Arthur

vice president of government affairs, based in Washington. She was vice president of government affairs for the Retail Industry Leaders Association, where she was lead lobbyist and spokeswoman on transportation and workforce issues. **Carlos Quijano** was named commercial director, air commerce, for Latin America. He was sales director, Western U.S., for LATAM Airlines Group.



Kelly Kolb



Troy Kaser

Alaska Airlines named **Troy Kaser** managing director of e-commerce. He was managing director of information technology services applications.

News in brief

GDSs

Etihad Airways is using **Sabre's** Fare Families solution to power Fare Choices, which allows travelers to select from a variety of ancillary service options such as checked bags, seat selection and extra mileage.

DataArt, a technology consulting firm that develops end-to-end solutions, joined the **Travelport Developer Network**, saying the new direction taken by the group is "strategically aligned with the services that DataArt provides to its clients."

Airlines

Air Tahiti Nui will adopt the **Amadeus Altéa Suite** for its reservations, inventory, check-in and departure control processes. The airline has also signed for three fully integrated, next-generation technology solutions: Amadeus Segment Revenue Management, Amadeus Loyalty Management and Amadeus Payment Platform.

Etihad Airways and **Avianca Brasil** signed a code-share agreement that will put Etihad's EY code on domestic flights operated by Avianca Brasil, while Avianca Brasil will put its 06 code on Etihad flights between Abu Dhabi and São Paulo. Etihad passengers will gain access to Rio de Janeiro, Curitiba, Florianópolis, Fortaleza, Porto Alegre, Recife, Salvador and Maceió. The carriers will implement frequent flyer reciprocity later this year.

Radixx International, a provider of cloud-based reservations

and distribution systems for airlines, signed Santiago, Chile-based Latin American Wings as a customer. The carrier, which launched in the spring, offers charter flights from Santiago to Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, and will add Asunción, Paraguay; Montevideo, Uruguay; Santa Cruz, Bolivia; and Porto Alegre, Brazil, this year.

Radixx also signed **Small Planet Airlines**, a Vilnius, Lithuania-based carrier that connects northern Europe with points in Greece, Spain, Italy, Turkey and Egypt.

Hotels

The **Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association** partnered with **SiteMinder** to bolster knowledge of distribution channel management in the Caribbean region through educational sessions at industry events, joint webinars and educational resources that share industry best practices and trends.

KwaTaqNuk Resort and Casino in Polson, Mont., selected **Agilysys Inc.'s** Visual One Property Management System and InfoGenesis Point of Sale.

SiteMinder secured a group-wide deal to provide the complete distribution and direct-booking technology solution for **Quest Apartment Hotels**, which has more than 150 properties in Australia and New Zealand. SiteMinder will power Quest's central reservations via its integrated technology suite comprising The Channel Manager, GDS by SiteMinder and TheBookingButton Internet booking engine.

Hotelogix, a provider of property management systems, and **Pro-Turismo**, a Colombian consultancy, formed a partnership to spread awareness of the benefits of cloud computing for hoteliers and to help with the transition.

Fastpayhotels, a B2B sales channel that helps hotels sell nonrefundable rates to travel agents, selected **DHISCO Inc.** to provide global connectivity for its hotel partners.

Lola, a travel company that provides personal travel service through a smartphone app that instantly connects users to its team of travel consultants, will provide customers with summarized hotel review content using **TrustYou's** Meta-Reviews. During its ramp-up phase, Lola is an invitation-only application.

Car rental

Cheapflights added car rental to its existing flight and holiday package search functionality through a new deal with CarTrawler, a B2B travel technology platform. Users can access 1,500 car rental agencies in 30,000 locations in 174 countries.

Rail

Egencia, Expedia Inc.'s business travel agency, is rolling out Rail by Egencia, a redesigned customer interface, in the U.S. Egencia has used **SilverRail's** API to facilitate its corporate customers' Amtrak bookings since 2010, and the new connection allows users to access features on Amtrak.com within their own company program.

Back Talk

We all get “personalized” e-mail offers from various travel suppliers, but mine never seem terribly personal once I read past the “Dear Michele” line. My most recent offer came from a hotel chain that apparently believes I would like to go to Las Vegas. Um, no. I loathe the place. I’ve been there several times, of course — it’s unavoidable — but I’ve never stayed at any of the chain’s properties there. Washington and New Orleans, also offered up, make more sense. But what’s up with the “staycation rates for Florida residents”? They’re off by about a thousand miles.

I often wonder whether this and other companies actually have any sort of “personalization” mechanism, or if they are throwing stuff at a wall and seeing what sticks. So I

asked a couple of friends who got the same promotional e-mail from the hotel chain. One, who lives in New York, got “lots of Florida.” The other, who lives near London, was offered San Diego, New York and Canada. I’ve been to San Diego twice in the last three years. I love it. I have friends there. So don’t I get a sale rate in San Diego? No. I get Las Vegas.

Come to think of it, I can’t think of a single offer that I have ever received that felt like it was meant for me. Nothing has ever made me say, “That’s just what I need right now.” Everybody wants to do personalization now. But if you’re going to do it, try to get it right. Because right now, it feels like “Dear Occupant.”

Comments? E-mail mmcdonald@amc-comm.com.

Order your subscription to Travel Technology Update

- One year, US \$450
 Two years, US \$850

Name _____

Title _____

Company _____

City/State _____

Postal or Zip
code/Country _____

Phone _____

E-Mail _____

Please make check payable in U.S.
dollars to AMC Communications In-
ternational Inc., P.O. Box 220432,
Saint Louis, MO 63122-0432.

For credit card payment, go to
ATWOnline.com and use the drop-
down Shop feature.

World news briefing

Sabre Corp. completed the second expansion in less than a year of its Bangalore, India, development center. The center, which plays a major role in developing airline solutions, now is building technology products for hotels, including central reservations and property management systems.

Akbar Travels of India, which has 57 IATA-approved branches, 40 non-IATA offices and an online portal, renewed a multi-year content and technology agreement with **Sabre Corp.**

Ten Group, a lifestyle and travel concierge service, launched an online concierge service in the U.K., integrating **Dolphin Dynamics’** booking system with its existing Dolphin back-office platform.

Ten Group also rolled out localized versions of the Dolphin back-office solution in Belgium, Switzerland and the U.S., supporting relevant languages within its user interface and customer documentation suite.

Virgin Trains, which connects six of the largest cities in the U.K., launched Railblazers, a free booking portal for small and medium-size businesses. Support for the tool is provided by a dedicated U.K.-based team.

Liverpool John Lennon Airport launched a customized version of the **Skyscanner** flight search engine on its website. The airport used the Skyscanner API to save customers the hassle of determining which airlines serve each destination from Liverpool.