MAKING A POSITIVE IMPACT THROUGH TRAVEL
For close to a decade, Yucatan Holidays has worked closely with celebrities and their charities to help those in need.

ARE YOU IN COMPLIANCE? CREDIT CARD SECURITY MATTERS
In an era of constant hacks, in order to keep your customers’ identities safe and maintain a strong reputation you need to be PCI DSS compliant.

INTUITIVE HOTEL APPS MAKE A STRONG IMPRESSION WITH GUESTS
They’re starting to become just as important as down comforters, extra towels, and a fully stocked minibar.

A Year of Good Karma
GNEX MIAMI
26-28 February 2018

GNEX 2018 will be the most impressive so far! Not only will it be held in the incredible city of Miami, but the conference itself will be held on one of the largest private yachts in America – the $40 million, 228ft SeaFair Grand Luxe megayacht!

Conveniently docked right outside the entrance to the Intercontinental Miami, which is the official event hotel, attendees will be able to wander between the megayacht and hotel at their leisure until the SeaFair sets sail on the final afternoon only.

For Sponsorship, Exhibiting and Speaker Opportunities visit gnexconference.com
Welcome...

Welcome to the October/December issue of Perspective Magazine. Can you believe another year is almost gone? In this issue, we’ll cover what some of the major players in our industry have been up to in 2017 as well as what the future holds for the timeshare management industry.

Our cover story, “A Year of Good Karma”, discusses what Karma Group’s Founder and Chairman, John Spence has been doing this year to bring his brand to the next level including establishing countless sponsorships and opening up stunning new properties.

We also highlight the philanthropic contributions Founder and CEO of Yucatan Holidays, Erika Garcia has made this year through the program Cancun for a Cause.

Our guest writer, Ericka Schwarm, who is the Director of Client Development at Equiant Financial Services makes it clear in her piece, “Are You In Compliance? Credit Card Security Matters” that it is extremely important to be proactive when protecting your customers’ personal information.

In North American news, we feature an editorial about how intuitive apps not only boost guest satisfaction, but also lead to repeat business. We’re also proud to announce that NFL player, Will Blackmon will be a guest speaker at GNEX 2018 in Miami, Florida.

In Latin American news, AMDETUR celebrated its 30th anniversary at their last conference held in June in Puerto Vallarta.

In Asia Pacific news, the ATHOC Update discusses their industry conference, “Bridging the Gap” which brought people from Australia and Singapore to the Northern New South Wales coast.

In Europe, Middle East, and Africa news we have some amazing highlights from RDO8’s “Together, Towards, Tomorrow” conference held in Marbella, Spain.

Enjoy!

Paul Mattimoe
CEO
Perspective Group
GLOBAL FEATURES

10  A Year of Good Karma
As 2017 draws to a close, Karma Group, one of the world’s most well-known travel and resort brands, continues to push the envelope and impress everyone in the industry. What hasn’t John Spence, Karma’s Founder and Chairman gotten into this year?

22  Making a Positive Impact Through Travel
Philanthropy has always been important to Erika Garcia. As the Founder and CEO of Yucatan Holidays and the Marketing CEO of Sunset Group, Garcia wanted to set her boutique travel agency apart from an already saturated market. For close to a decade, Yucatan Holidays has worked directly with a wide range of nonprofit organizations and high-profile celebrities to help those in need.

32  Are You In Compliance?
Credit Card Security Matters
For the past few years, the same news story has garnered headlines over and over again. A retailer, restaurant chain or lodging provider was the victim of a credit card hack. As I write this, it was just revealed that Whole Foods and Sonic are the most recent to experience a breach of customer credit card data.

36  So...the question is...Why Should You CARE?
The Cooperative Association of Resort Exchangers is so much more than the name eludes. The (not-for-profit) trade association, more commonly recognized and referred to as C.A.R.E., emulates the definition of that acronym as a word which is “the provision of what is necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance, and protection of someone or something and further serious attention or consideration applied to doing something correctly or to avoid damage or risk”.

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Intuitive Apps Make a Strong Impression
Mobile applications make all of our lives easier, but when it comes to the satisfaction of hotel guests, they’re starting to become just as important as down comforters, extra towels, and a fully stocked minibar. Simply put, you can’t woo customers with free HBO anymore. As hotels finally step into the modern age, they’re realizing that their mobile applications shouldn’t be considered an afterthought.

GNEX Conference Announces NFL Player, Will Blackmon as Guest Speaker
Innovative Vacation Ownership, Hotel & Resort Conference announces Will Blackmon, an NFL safety and return specialist as a Guest Speaker for the upcoming 2018 event in Miami Florida.

AMDETUR Update
The Mexican Resort Development Association (AMDETUR) and the Association of Tourism Timeshare Developers and Promoters (ADEPROTUR) joined forces to hold the organization’s 31st annual convention. The event held in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico also marked AMDETUR’s 27th annual expo, and included a special marketing and sales forum titled “Awakening and Transcending.”

Lifestyle Holidays Vacation Club Dominican Republic Receives Five 2017 RCI Gold Crown Award And Other Top RCI Honors
Lifestyle Holidays Vacation Club (“LHVC”), located in Puerto Plata on the North Coast of the Dominican Republic, has received five RCI Gold Crown Awards, one RCI Silver Crown Award, the Diamond Award for Lifestyle’s operations team and a Top Seller Award for 14 Lifestyle sales and administrative executives. RCI, the global leader in vacation exchange and part of the Wyndham Worldwide family of brands (NYSE: WYN), presents awards annually to the top RCI affiliated resorts.
ATHOC Update
This year the industry headed off to the Northern New South Wales coast to Salt at Kingscliff. Terrific location for a conference. Close enough, but far enough away! With people flying in from all across Australia and Singapore, it was a great backdrop for 3 days of conferencing and activities.

Anantara Vacation Club Launches Loyalty Partnership with Asia Miles
Anantara Vacation Club is pleased to now offer more opportunities than ever before to its upper-tier Club Points Owners. Elite Diamond, Platinum and Royal Club Points Owners will have the opportunity to embark on a new journey with Asia Miles. This partnership enables Club Points Owners to enjoy a wide range of options on excellent travel and lifestyle offers from Asia Miles partners.

RDO8 Conference Highlights
This year we returned once again to the beautiful Don Carlos Leisure Resort & Spa located in gorgeous Marbella. For the duration of the conference we were treated to perfect blue skies. Of course this is what we’ve come to expect from this amazing area of Spain; it is the Costa del Sol after all!

Hospitality company has been named a FTSE4Good constituent, building on key CSR achievements contributing to business success
In addition to a half decade of recognition in North America by the Dow Jones Sustainability Index, Wyndham Worldwide (NYSE: WYN) is for the first time being named a socially responsible leader in Europe through the FTSE4Good Index Series.
Developers and HOAs - Independence through Unity

ARC Resorts has more than 30 years of industry experience and offers a range of expert solutions to help developers and Home Owner Associations keep their organisations on track.

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- Plan Terminations

American Resort Collection

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A Year of Good Karma
As 2017 draws to a close, Karma Group, one of the world’s most well-known travel and resort brands, continues to push the envelope and impress everyone in the industry. What hasn’t John Spence, Karma’s Founder and Chairman gotten into this year?

Besides keeping busy by becoming a major sponsor for a variety of high-profile sports teams, joining forces with music festivals, and taking time out for charity endeavors, Karma Group has continued to expand its extensive business portfolio by opening up and laying the groundwork on more stunning and unique properties throughout the globe.

Karma kicked off the year by renewing their sponsorship contract with the Western Australia Rugby Union and Road Safety Western Force club as an Official Resort Partner. Karma has held this distinction with Western Force since the club was founded in 2005, and because of this, they are able to offer their members special perks throughout the Super Rugby season including tickets to every home match, the chance for rugby fans to get their hands on one-of-a-kind memorabilia, and access to special workshops and clinics with the club. The brand solidified its passion for the game by also inking a new deal in September with the Rugby Football Union and will be sponsoring England Sevens Rugby for the entire 2017/2018 season. Karma has also continued its efforts in support of youth rugby at the grassroots level by offering training and coaching clinics with work through the Bali Life Foundation and sponsoring Brighton College’s prestigious Senior Rugby program for the 2017/2018 season.

Karma knows the importance of increasing brand awareness with sports sponsorships. 
at the Podium Lounge during Singapore’s 10th Formula 1 Grand Prix weekend. The closing event featured fashion designer Mauricio Alpizar who debuted his new resort collection “Modern Asia”, and a slew of A-list celebrities from the world of entertainment, fashion, and F1. No doubt about it, glitz and glamour follow Karma wherever they go.

The biggest news in 2017 for Karma by far has been the opening of their latest properties and announcing future resorts to the Karma family. In March, they added Vietnam to the long list of countries that they operate in.

Karma completely refurbished the Karma Cây Tre outside of Hoi An to bring the resort up to their high standards. This sprawling property is a group of 22 standalone deluxe rooms with private balconies overlooking the banks of the Do River or with views of the lush tropical landscape that surrounds the property. In an interview during the resort’s launch, Spence stated, “Vietnam has an extraordinary mix of history and culture and an increasing reputation for world-class hospitality. I fell in love with the central coast area of Vietnam, with its incredible beauty, rich multicultural heritage and landmark towns like Da Nang, Hué and of course, Hoi An. Throw in stunning beaches and brilliant sights and you have a perfect fit for the Karma experience.”

That same month, Karma acquired 26 vacation apartments outside of the quaint town of Agios Nikolaos on the island of Crete. Named after the Minoan Civilization who ruled the island over 3,000 years ago, Karma Minoan is nestled between the sea and the rugged mountains, creating a breathtaking landscape for guests to enjoy.

The biggest news in 2017 for Karma by far has been the opening of their latest properties and announcing future resorts to the Karma family.
This year marked an important milestone in not only Karma’s history, but will impact the future for others in the vacation membership sector in regard to expanding to city-center properties. Karma purchased an equity stake in the chic urban hideaway, Sanctum SoHo. Located in London’s famous West End, the newly branded Karma Sanctum SoHo has been a popular destination for hip travelers who want to enjoy a bit of bohemian opulence. Unique hotel features include private movie screening rooms, popup tattoo parlors, and recording studios. The Karma Sanctum SoHo won the 2017 TripExpert “Experts Choice” Award and nabbed the honor of the UK’s best boutique hotel for 2016. Music industry mogul and CEO of The Sanctum Hospitality Group, Mark Fuller said, “This is a really great move for us and we’re delighted to be partnering with John and his team. We share the same vision; creating a unique luxury travel experience with a twist of rock. We’re making changes to the London hotel and have secured several sites internationally. We’re all investing a lot into this merge and are excited for the future.”

It makes perfect sense to sponsor a music festival if your name is on the marque of a hotel where rock stars like to mingle. In early October, Karma helped produce Bestival Bali; an international expansion of the popular UK music festival to the Karma Beach Bali property. Bestival Bali featured nonstop dancing, partying, and music from Rudimental, De La Soul, and funk legends George Clinton and Parliament Funkadelic. It appears that Bestival Bali will be back next year and you can bet Karma will want their name attached to the event.

Philanthropic efforts were also on the brand’s radar this year as they continued to expand their Karma Cares program by offering items
and aid to the thousands of people in Bali who have been affected by the volcanic eruption of Mount Agung. For the third year in a row, Karma raised money for Christel House India; a center in Bangalore, India that provides education, food, and healthcare to impoverished children through their beloved Penguin Walk which was held on the Côte d’Azur.

You don’t need to look in a crystal ball to see what the future holds for Karma Group. One thing is for sure, they will continue their reputation as a resort brand whose mission is to provide guests with exceptional service at their 27 (and counting!) properties in exotic locales worldwide.
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— Discover all that UVC has to offer.
Prestigious CVOA Cornerstone Award Awarded to RTX

The Canadian Vacation Ownership Association (CVOA) has named the Asheville, N.C. exchange innovator, RTX, as the recipient of the 2017 CVOA Cornerstone Award. The prestigious award recognizes a truly outstanding shared ownership innovator. The CVOA Awards Committee selected RTX from numerous entries.

The formal Cornerstone Award presentation took place during CVOA’s highly successful VO-Con ‘17 in Whistler, B.C. Justin Hunter, Vice President of Operations and Corina Violette, Director of Partnerships RTX accepted the award from Jon Zwickel, President and CEO of CVOA.

RTX was at recognized for its exceptional role in working with the Canadian timeshare industry. RTX met the stringent criteria to win the award and their entry emphasized the fast-growing company’s exceptional strides with a concentration on improving Customer Service with a strong commitment to technology. Their new tech system was praised for customized solutions that contributed to the member satisfaction and the company’s rapid growth.

CVOA President and CEO Jon Zwickel says, “This is the 5th year that we have presented this prestigious award. Previous winners include Lifestyle Holidays Vacation Club, National Timeshare Owners Association, Dial An Exchange and Whistler Vacation Club. We are proud that RTX is a member of CVOA and honor its growth and acceptance in the exchange arena.”

About the Canadian Vacation Ownership Association
CVOA is Canada’s only association dedicated to representing the interests of the vacation ownership and resort development industries. Since its founding 1980 (originally as CRDA), the organization has become Canada’s preeminent industry association representing all forms of vacation ownership. CVOA membership is a community of active industry leaders committed to promoting and maintaining a high standard of ethical conduct within the Canadian vacation ownership industry, creating B-2-B and networking opportunities between Members, and educating consumers as to the benefits of vacation ownership. For more information, please visit www.CanadianVOA.org

About RTX
Resort Travel & Xchange (RTX) is a timeshare and vacation ownership exchange company based in Asheville, N.C. RTX works with a number of resorts and developers throughout the world to provide the best exchange options possible to its members. In addition to exchange services, RTX offers numerous travel benefits to members, such as reservation protection, rebates, travel discounts and more. RTX also has a robust selection of partner solutions for resorts, management companies, and HOAs, including member servicing, marketing, communications and more. RTX has approximately 80,000 members. For more information visit www.rtx.travel.
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For the third consecutive year, staySky® Vacation Clubs, a premier membership-based program located in Orlando, FL and their affiliate, staySky® Hotels & Resorts has been given the prestigious distinction as two of the Orlando Sentinel’s Top 100 Companies for Working Families in Central Florida. The entire list can be viewed here.

In order for a company to earn a spot as one of the Top 100 Companies for Working Families, organizations across Central Florida enter a two-part survey process. First, an employee questionnaire with 77 questions evaluates the company’s philosophy, demographics, practices, and workplace policies. The second part is an employee satisfaction survey that covers such topics as leadership, corporate culture, an employee’s role within the company, training, management, and work environment.

staySky® Vacation Clubs and staySky® Hotels & Resorts are known in the industry for going above and beyond for their guests, but they are also fully committed to their employees’ well being and providing a positive corporate culture. Employees from both staySky® Vacation Clubs and staySky® Hotels & Resorts were in attendance to accept their awards at a special luncheon held on August 18th, 2017 at the Renaissance Resort at Sea World Orlando. Randy Steinbeck of staySky® Vacation Clubs was delighted to represent a company that holds this meaningful honor.

“This is a celebration and recognition for all of the staff members within the staySky® companies who are committed to raising the bar and working together as a team to be the very best.” Steinbeck happily stated. “staySky® Vacation Clubs and staySky® Hotels & Resorts will continue to attract the best talent for years to come and will be looking forward to what can be achieved as we continue to grow through the end of this year and into 2018.”

With this latest accolade, staySky® Vacation Clubs and staySky® Hotels & Resorts has solidified their reputation as a company in the hospitality industry that recognizes the importance of a positive business environment and employees’ balance between work and home.

staySky® Vacation Clubs Launches Your Way Product to Personalize Membership Obligations and Terms

staySky® Vacation Clubs, a premier membership-based program, has expanded its product line to provide the flexibility to experience the full benefits of a vacation membership club without the obligation of a lifetime with the recent launch of staySky® Your Way.

staySky® Vacation Clubs is committed to enhancing the quality of life through a world of vacations and knows that life changes all the time. staySky®’s Your Way product offers the full package of staySky® benefits, including the staySky® Escapes platform. The difference is the maximum membership commitment is only 17.5 years as opposed to 49 years or longer.

Your Way not only shortens the overall product term but offers members the option to opt-out of use rights at every 35-month interval. If the member decides that they can no longer meet the annual maintenance fee commitment, the member can elect to forgo their membership use rights and discontinue paying maintenance fees for their membership. Alternatively, members may use their membership points to pay their annual maintenance fees through the staySky® Escapes program. Your Way reinvents the traditional structure for maintenance fees, providing consumers a much more flexible product.

staySky® Vacation Clubs new program is perfect for those that are not looking to make a long-term commitment but want the freedom for more travel flexibility, savings and time spent with friends without having to pay the full price for a traditional 49-year or longer vacation membership club product.
"We believe that timeshare owners should have the right to gracefully exit their unwanted timeshares, and that the exit should not damage the timeshare industry in the process. Cyria Group is committed to finding viable timeshare exit strategies that work for the entire industry, especially for the consumers that support it."

-Cory Stegemann, Founder & CEO, Cyria Group Inc.

At Cyria Group, we assist in removing timeshare owners from their unwanted timeshare obligations. We offer affordable, convenient, and guaranteed solutions that work.

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Dedicated to the protection of the timeshare industry, without compromising individual timeshare owners.
Cyria Group’s CEO Cory Stegemann Elected to CVOA Board of Directors

Cory Stegemann, Founder & CEO, of both Cyria Group Inc. and Genesecy Corporation was recently elected to the board of directors of the Canadian Vacation Ownership Association (CVOA). The announcement was made during the Annual Board Meeting at VO-Con 2017 conference held at the Four Seasons in picturesque Whistler, BC earlier this month. Stegemann joins a prestigious list of directors that can be viewed here.

Formerly CRDA, the Canadian Vacation Owner's Association (CVOA) is the only vacation ownership association in Canada that is devoted to representing the concerns of those in the vacation ownership and resort development industries. Founded in 1980, CVOA is a thriving community of vacation ownership leaders who are advocates for maintaining high ethical standards within the Canadian vacation ownership industry. The CVOA is not only able to provide countless B2B networking opportunities for their members, but they continue to educate consumers about the benefits of vacation ownership.

“It is with great pleasure we welcome Cory to our Board of Directors. His knowledge and expertise, especially in working with homeowners associations, legacy resorts and their owners, will prove invaluable as CVOA undertakes new initiatives in this vital component of our timeshare industry.” Said Jon Zwickel, President and CEO, CVOA.

Cyria Group, which was founded by Stegemann in 2007 has a proven track record in the industry when it comes to providing solutions for ownership trade-ins and transfers. The company continues to expand its reach in regard to connecting with developers and consumers.

Stegemann was honored to sponsor, attend, and speak at this year’s VO-Con, which has become Canada’s top event for those in the vacation ownership industry. With his introduction into the Board of Directors for the CVOA, Stegemann could not be happier or more ready to offer his extensive industry knowledge to the association, and become more involved in the timeshare industry as a whole. His passion for bridging client and organization together has been his driving force since opening the doors to his own companies.

“I always knew that I wanted to have my own companies that supported the industry I have worked in for so long. I wanted to build organizations that helped consumers discover more about timeshare as a whole, and educate them on the options available to them as the relationship with their ownerships change”, says Stegemann.

While attending VO-Con 2017, Cyria Group was able to speed quality time with their current clients to talk about future strategies and establish new clients. During his panel session, Stegemann discussed how the company repurposes original inventory, stabilizes the movement of inventory, and generates additional revenue.

With offices in Canada and Mexico, Cyria Group is a sales and marketing company that expertly assists developers and timeshare owners with the fulfillment of ownership trade-ins, offering an intuitive cloud-based software platform for seamless point of sale transactions. For more information on working with Cyria Group, visit http://www.cyriagroup.com

About Cyria Group, Inc.
Cyria Group is a Canadian-based timeshare consultation firm that offers services to developers, timeshare owners, and vacation ownership resorts. Known for their impressive track record, Cyria Group is proud to provide ethical solutions to help owners who need to be relieved of their interests by providing them access to industry-supported programs.

About the Canadian Vacation Ownership Association
CVOA (Formerly CRDA) is Canada’s only organization committed to furthering of ownership-based vacation and resort development industries. For almost 40 years, CVOA has been the premier vacation ownership association in Canada. The CVOA is an active member-based community of industry leaders who are committed to promoting and maintaining a high standard of ethical conduct within the Canadian vacation ownership industry. The CVOA provides members with access to B2B opportunities and helps to educate consumers on the benefits of vacation ownership.
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Philanthropy has always been important to Erika Garcia. As the Founder and CEO of Yucatan Holidays and the Marketing CEO of Sunset Group, Garcia wanted to set her boutique travel agency apart from an already saturated market. For close to a decade, Yucatan Holidays has worked directly with a wide range of nonprofit organizations and high-profile celebrities to help those in need. Through the program, Cancun for a Cause, vacationers are able to support the region of Quintana Roo, and explore everything the state has to offer including Cancun, Playa del Carmen, and Tulum. In turn, Cancun for a Cause is able to donate a percentage of each trip’s profits to a specific charity.

This summer, Garcia attended the Global Gift Foundation’s Gala in Marbella, Spain as a special guest for her continuous philanthropic efforts with the charity and spent time in London as a sponsor for The Dot Com Children’s Foundation. Founded by actress María Bravo and Alina Peralta in 2013, the Global Gift Foundation is able to donate a substantial amount of money to women and children in need throughout the world by uniting celebrities, Global Gifters, and prominent donors.
members of the philanthropic community at their six yearly events. Despite holding galas in London, Dubai, Paris, and other major cities, the annual star-studded bash in Marbella at the gorgeous Gran Melia Don Pepe Resort is the organization’s paramount get together, and is undoubtedly the largest charity gala on the Costa del Sol. Rocio Galan, the director of the Gran Melia Don Pepe Resort was thrilled that the large charity organization once again chose his hotel stating, “It is a pleasure to host the sixth Global Gift Gala with Maria Bravo and all her team as we consider this event as one of the most important events of the Costa del Sol. Our support is unconditional because we believe that the Global Gift Foundation is doing a great job in the city”.

This year, the weekend celebration of giving benefited several charities, including the Querer Foundation, a Spanish organization lead by Pilar Garcia de la Granja that focuses on increasing scientific research and education for children who suffer from neurological disorders, and Hollywood A-lister Eva Longoria’s nonprofit, The Eva Longoria Foundation, whose mission is to guide women into entrepreneurship and to support the economic and educational advancement of Latina women.

In September, Garcia attended an event that Cancun for a Cause sponsored for The Dot Com Children’s Foundation. Formed in 2013 by former Sky News presenter, Sharon Evans, The Dot Com Children’s Foundation is a charity whose mission is to empower children about issues that worry them. R&B legend, Dionne Warwick headlined the gala which raised money for programs in the UK to educate school-aged children on making positive life choices and to speak up against abuse and domestic violence. Evans was thrilled to see her charity receive international recognition saying, “It was a dream come true having Miss Warwick and her son Damon Elliott come to London to support the charity and put our work on the global stage. Seeing
so many celebrities also get behind Dot Com was a very social moment in the charities history.”

Combing her skills as a hospitality marketing guru and her passion for giving back to the community, Garcia was inspired by a Spanish graduate student who was working with indigenous communities in Mexico. After a year and a half of research, the student was able to determine the indigenous culture’s needs, what talents and resources they had, and how they could help them become entrepreneurs in the tourism industry, but still be able to honor and uphold their culture. Garcia ended up helping these communities financially through the program, Kanche by giving them the tools they needed to provide excursions to international tourists.

After seeing how successful Kanche became, how popular the tours were, and the major economic impact it made on the Mayan community, Garcia realized that in order to raise more money for charity and to attract more tourists to Sunset Group’s properties in Mexico, she needed to bring in big names in the world of entertainment and sports. She began to partner with celebrities and their charities throughout Latin America, but instead of just cutting checks, Garcia made the personal commitment to actually visit the foundations and tour the areas that were being helped by her philanthropy. Garcia’s most notable work has been with the Grammy Award Winning artist, Shakira. Formed in 2003, the Pies Descalzos (Bare Feet) Foundation was created by the platinum selling Latin American superstar and named after her 1995 debut album. For 14 years, the nonprofit organization has been able to build six schools for students in impoverished areas of Colombia. In 2016, the school established in her hometown of Barranquilla became the number one school in the entire country.

Garcia describes Cancun for a Cause’s business plan as a “win-win” situation
for vacationers, charities, celebrities, and for the official foundation, Vacaciones con Causa, which has an alliance with Sunset World, to draw more clients to their extensive list of stunning properties like Ocean Spa in Cancun and Hacienda Tres Rios; a fully sustainable resort, spa, and nature park with three ecosystems. In an interview in 2015 Garcia said, “Social franchising gives you an opportunity to franchise a methodology and a proven system so you can reach specific economic social objectives. So, what you are doing is investing in the outcomes. Consumers, especially millennials, are attracted to businesses that make it a point to give back. According to research conducted by Jeff Fromm for the Boston Group’s study The Millennial Consumer Debunking Stereotypes, millennials are more receptive to brands and companies who utilize cause marketing than previous generations and are more likely to continue to support a brand who promotes their philanthropic efforts. Vacations make people feel good about relaxing, and enjoying time off from the stress of everyday life, but Cancun for a Cause adds an additional element of being able to help others through their booked trips which attracts younger buyers. Because of Garcia’s association with celebrity charities lead by Shakira, Eva Longoria, and Sophia Vergara, Sunset Group is also able to utilize these household names when it comes to promotional materials to draw even more business to their resorts. When celebrities whose charities are benefitted by Cancun for a Cause’s efforts visit the Yucatan Peninsula, they appear in informational videos that educate future buyers and vacationers on not only the culture and wondrous beauty of Cancun, but the impressive amenities offered by the Sunset Group’s fabulous resorts. Ultimately, Garcia’s goal through Cancun for a Cause is to show people that by investing in themselves by visiting one of Sunset Group’s properties for a much-needed vacation they are also making a difference in the lives of thousands of people throughout Latin America. Although the program is aligned with over 20 charities, Cancun for Cause is always seeking new contacts and organizations to help through their impressive and meaningful business model.

Garcia describes Cancun for a Cause’s business plan as a “win-win” situation for vacationers, charities, celebrities, and Sunset Group’s advertising efforts.

Pennsylvania, they appear in informational videos that educate future buyers and vacationers on not only the culture and wondrous beauty of Cancun, but the impressive amenities offered by the Sunset Group’s fabulous resorts.
Exploring the benefits of American Resort Collection’s Freedom365™ program isn’t confined to traveling at over 4,000 luxury resorts around the world. Members can use their Savings Dollars with the Shop365 and Wine365 benefit to access pricing exclusive to Freedom365.

Freedom365 members receive an annual allotment of Savings Dollars that give them the opportunity to explore limitless member-only discounts with Shop365. Members can apply their Savings Dollars like cash to eliminate the markup on luxury items, using the currency to reduce out-of-pocket investments on both travel and brand-name merchandise.

These exclusive offerings present the ultimate immersive vacation and lifestyle membership within reach 365 days a year to deliver the lifestyle Freedom365™ members deserve all in on place. The easy-to-use website is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to enable members to secure the lowest available price on carefully selected products and various brands.

The Freedom365 membership includes exclusive values on award-winning wines with Wine365. Members can find specially-procured options that are unavailable to the general public along with selections from international and boutique wineries. Wine365 allows members to find their favorite wine from their last trip and or send a deluxe gift basket to a friend all from the convenience of their home.

The partnership between American Resort Collection, RCI, and I.C.E connects various moving parts within the vacation ownership industry while restructuring the traditional framework for timeshare memberships to appeal to every generation.

The flexibility of Freedom365 goes beyond a membership service of accumulating and spending Savings Dollars. Freedom365 motivates members to interact in an integrated marketplace that rewards satisfying needs by indulging in desires.

To learn more about ARC’s Freedom365 program, please visit www.arcfreedom365.com to start making memories that last a lifetime.

Freedom365™ Presents Endless Destinations of Value Developed by The American Resort Collection

Spending less on everyday things is simple through American Resort Collection’s (ARC) Savings Dollars, the membership currency offered by the newly launched Freedom365 program.

Whether members are gifting Savings Dollars for a special occasion or deciding where to take an annual trip, Freedom365 gives members access to incredible deals on resort stays with Unlimited Preferred Resort Stays.

Through partnerships with numerous hospitality partners, members can select last-minute inventory at the locked-in rate of $299 for a seven-night stay or choose from a larger selection of inventory with flexible dates at a guaranteed 30% discount. Freedom365 gives exclusive priority access to the ARC properties and affiliates, benefiting resort associations that would otherwise rely on third parties to fill the unused inventory and replacing the streams of income upon which they depend for financial security.

In addition to resort accommodations, the Freedom365 membership provides access to endless destinations on ARC’s world-class hotel platform, making booking incredibly easy. Room365 allows members to reserve nights at over 150,000 hotels and filter results for features such as five-star dining, special access, stunning views, and even full-service spas.

Room365 can help match members to destinations by designing itineraries tailored to requests. Members can use the feature to in conjunction with the Unlimited Preferred Resort Stays or Room365 to connect them with the perfect holiday, much like a personal assistant. Room365 completely customizes memberships and provides an experienced Concierge professional to answer any and all questions about the program, vacations, and shopping opportunities.

Supplementary to resort and hotel stays, members have the freedom to wake up in a different destination every day with Sail365.
WE’RE HERE FOR TIMESHARE OWNERS

Educating, Advocating, and Helping Timeshare Owners
Find Resolutions to Ownership Issues for Nearly 20 Years.

COMMUNITY

EDUCATE
To learn how to best utilize your timeshare and find new services

ADVOCATE
To preserve timeshare owner rights and consumer protections

ENCOURAGE
To increase usage and ownership to maximize your vacation experience

By joining the NTOA, you become part of a community dedicated to supporting timeshare owners. As the premier organization giving a united voice to the nearly 8 million timeshare owners in the United States and Canada, the NTOA proactively seeks opportunities to promote the timeshare industry’s continued growth and positive public image. Members gain access to some of the most powerful information and educational tools available to timeshare owners today. The members-only area of our website offers travel-related discounts, special rate VO financing/refinancing, an online education center, an one-stop news source, and so much more!

Join today and discover how membership can help you ‘enjoy the adventure’! For more information on becoming a member, visit www.ntoassoc.com; email us at memberservices@ntoassoc.com; or call us at 844 ASK-NTOA.
Apple Leisure Group Bolsters Leadership Team to Drive Aggressive Hotel Development Growth Strategy
Company Announces New Vice President of Development, Federico Moreno-Nickerson

Apple Leisure Group® (ALG) has announced the addition of Vice President of Development Federico Moreno-Nickerson to the team as part of the company’s overarching strategy to grow its resort brand management portfolio through its subsidiary, AMResorts.

 Moreno-Nickerson will support the ALG Development team, which is hyper-focused on delivering unmatched hospitality expertise to hotel owners looking to invest in new assets or boost existing hotel property performance across Mexico, the Caribbean and Latin America.

To reinforce ALG’s expansion efforts, the company unveiled a new website, ALGdevelopment.com, where hotel owners and investors can learn about the company’s offerings and unique positioning, latest news and industry updates from the leadership team.

“Growing our existing development team is part of our strategic approach to give hotel owners the right partner to grow in the competitive all-inclusive sector and secure strong return on investments,” said Javier Coll, Executive Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer of Apple Leisure Group.

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or to arrange a demo contact Sharon Mattimoe at
demo@intuitionbrandmarketing.com
DAE Confirms As Signature Sponsor for GNEX MIAMI

Worldwide vacation exchange provider, DAE, confirms its 8th consecutive year as a sponsor of the GNEX Conference. This year they will increase their participation from Platinum Level to the newly created Signature Sponsorship category, which is now the highest available level.

The Global Networking Experience, commonly known as GNEX Conference is synonymous with attracting senior-level executives to different stunning locations each year, creating unique business-making environments and delivering spectacular social events.

In 2018, the conference will be held on the world’s first mega-yacht venue, the $40 million, 228ft SeaFair Grand Luxe that recently completed a further $10 million renovation to provide a truly unique event venue that boasts more than 22,000 square feet of meeting space.

As a Signature Sponsor, DAE will share top-billing at the event, including sponsorship recognition for the luxurious venue onboard the SeaFair Grand Luxe, and the two official social events.

DAE has changed exchange through innovation and value-added service. As global leaders in vacation exchange, DAE’s approach is simple. The privately-owned company offers a platform that is easy to use and puts members’ needs first, without hidden fees, complicated rules or trading powers. DAE services over 1.5 million timeshare owners worldwide, including 550,000 direct members.

“DAE has been a huge supporter of GNEX since the beginning because we believe entirely in its premise to bring all corners of the industry together to reach common goals and continually improve the way we operate for the benefit of our owners and members. We’re proud to now show our support as Signature Sponsors of this fantastic annual event”, Says Francis Taylor, CEO, DAE Global.

The Global Networking Experience, as it is aptly named, will provide unique networking sessions and further extended networking time in a luxurious environment, where industry leaders and new entrants alike can meet and find new business opportunities that will help drive their businesses forwards in the coming year.

Guest Speakers, Interactive Sessions, and Workshops will also be available throughout the four decks, providing valuable educational content on pertinent topics, and delivering an exciting schedule for attendees to plan their meetings around.

For more information and to register for the event, visiting http://gnexconference.com/register

To request a sponsorship brochure, visit http://gnexconference.com/sponsorship

About DAE
DAE is the world’s leading privately owned vacation exchange provider. With an established network of resort partners, DAE offers exchange availability at thousands of resorts in the most exciting destinations around the globe.

Operating from 11 global offices located across North America, UK, Europe, Asia-Pacific, South Africa and the Middle East, DAE delivers a range of products and services to help businesses in the timeshare industry achieve their goals and objectives – providing local solutions with a global outlook.

For more information, visit www.daelive.com
WHO SHOULD ATTEND

• RESORT DEVELOPERS  • HOTELIERS  • CONDOMINIUM DEVELOPERS
• LENDERS  • HOSPITALITY INVESTORS AND CONSULTANTS
• REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT TRUSTS  • INVESTMENT BANKERS
• PRIVATE EQUITY FIRMS  • HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY SUPPLIERS

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$279 | (Valid through September 22)

For sponsorship, conference information, and hotel reservations, visit sharedownershipinvestment.com.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER:
JAY BAER
Author of the best-selling new book, Hug Your Haters

Haters aren’t your problem … ignoring them is. If it feels like there are more complaints than ever, you’re right. But the rise of customer complaints is actually an enormous opportunity. Renowned strategist, author, and entrepreneur, Jay Baer reveals brand-new, proprietary research into the science of complaints — and how to turn customer service into a marketing advantage.
For the past few years, the same news story has garnered headlines over and over again. A retailer, restaurant chain or lodging provider was the victim of a credit card hack. As I write this, it was just revealed that Whole Foods and Sonic are the most recent to experience a breach of customer credit card data.

If you want to protect your customers—and your company’s reputation—from a similar fate, there’s one term you need to learn and pay attention to right away: PCI DSS compliant.

What does it mean? The Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard is an information security standard for organizations that handle branded credit cards from the major card companies. Launched more than a decade ago, the PCI Security Standard Council (PCI SSC) is an independent body created by some major card brands (Visa, MasterCard, American Express, Discover and JCB) to manage the ever-changing payment landscape and ensure that the most up-to-date security measures are in place to protect cardholders. The standards are in place to ensure that
companies maintain a certain security standard in their practice of accepting, processing, storing or transmitting credit card information. Validation of compliance is performed annually, either by an external Qualified Security Assessor (QSA) or by a firm specific Internal Security Assessor that creates a report on compliance for organizations handling large volumes of transactions, or by Self-Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ) for companies handling smaller volumes.

The assessments measure compliance with the standards that any organization that accepts, stores or transmits cardholder data are held to. Cardholder data is defined by the PCI SSC as “the full primary account number (PAN) or the full PAN along with either the cardholder name, expiration date or service code.” There are four levels that merchants fall under, which are based on the volume of transactions processed. However, certain risk factors can put a merchant into a higher level based upon the card issuer’s determination.

There are penalties for non-compliance, which vary between the payment brands. According to PCI Compliance Guide, they may, at their discretion, fine an acquiring bank $5,000 to $100,000 per month for PCI compliance violations.

If you want to protect your customers—and your company’s reputation—from a similar fate, there’s one term you need to learn and pay attention to right away: PCI DSS compliant.

Usually, the bank will pass this fine over to the merchant, and will often either terminate the bank/merchant relationship or increase transaction fees. Hefty fines and being labelled as high-risk can spell big trouble for many small businesses. By establishing top-tier security practices from the start, you can potentially save your business a significant amount of financial burden in the future.

According to Verizon’s 2017 Payment Security Report, only 55.4 percent of companies meet all PCI DSS compliance standards. While this number is up 7 percent from 2015, it still translates to nearly half of retailers, IT services companies, payment software providers and hospitality organizations do not adequately protect credit cardholder information.

Additionally, 44.6 percent of companies fall out of PCI DSS compliance within nine months of validation.

The report listed results for the hospitality sector separately. Less than half (42.9 percent) of hospitality organizations achieved full compliance at interim assessment in 2016—the lowest of the four key verticals. Only a quarter (25.0 percent) of hospitality organizations in the Americas achieved full compliance at interim assessment.

When choosing a credit card processor, it’s imperative that you select one that has achieved and maintained PCI compliance. I’m proud to say that Equiant has made this a priority. We recently again received the Payment Card Industry Security Standards Council’s highest level of certification: PCI Certification Level 1. The PCI Level 1 certification provides yet another reassurance that Equiant can accept, process, store and transmit
credit card information on client’s behalf in a secure environment. Equiant has maintained its PCI Level 1 Certification since it first applied in 2011 and remains the only loan servicing company serving vacation ownership developers to receive the coveted certification. Equiant is also a member of the prestigious Visa Global Registry of Service Providers (www.visa.com/splisting), demonstrating its commitment to strict security standards and full compliance with PCI regulations. As Visa recommends, “Clients and merchants should reference the site regularly as part of their due-diligence process and should only use service providers that are listed on the Registry for outsourcing their payment-related services.”

If your business accepts credit card payments, you need to be concerned about it, too. In addition to the penalties for non-compliance, there are other sound, common-sense, self-interested reasons to comply voluntarily.

As we move further into the digital age where we are asking consumers to download our apps and share more and more personal information with us, it’s even more important to prevent a data breach.

In a recent consumer survey, 66 percent say they would be unlikely to do business with an organization that experienced a breach where their financial and sensitive information was stolen. And even if they would trust your company with a credit card transaction again, would they be willing to share their location with you on your app? Will they be willing to allow your app to access their contacts and other personal information?

Here’s where that PCI DSS compliance proves its worth. According to the Verizon reported mentioned above, of all the payment card data breaches that Verizon has investigated between 2010 and 2016—nearly 300—not a single organization was fully PCI DSS compliant at the time of the breach.

It goes without saying that protecting your organization and your owners’ and members’ personal data from outside threats is of ultimate importance to you. Making sure that you’re in the know on PCI compliance is an important step in making sure that protection is in place.

Ericka Schwarm is director of client development at Equiant, one of the leading timeshare servicers in the United States with a portfolio that exceeds $1 billion and includes more than 125,000 individual consumer loans. Over the past 28 years, Equiant has serviced more than 1.5 million loans and 1.25 million maintenance fees accounts. Its array of products and services includes loan receivables and maintenance fee servicing on a fully hosted web platform, Platform as a Service (PaaS) receivables technology, point of sale merchant processing, delinquency control, document custody (including digital), and analytic reporting. To learn more about Equiant’s industry-leading security and receivables servicing, call Schwarm at (480) 636-4892 or Peter Moody, vice president of business development, at (480) 636-4888 or visit www.equiant.com.

According to PCI Compliance Guide, they may, at their discretion, fine an acquiring bank $5,000 to $100,000 per month for PCI compliance violations.
Natalie’s Story of SURVIVAL

I am writing in regards to the opportunity to participate in the Empowerment Vacation that you host.

The description of the vacation and the goal of rediscovering my inner beauty, strength and grace intrigued me.

In battling cancer for 4 1/2 years so far, I feel that I have lost so much of myself in an effort to just survive. The surgeries that I have had have left me scarred and uncomfortable. Being on chemo twice has changed my appearance as well as my energy level and radiation to my body has caused permanent damage to my muscles.

I was diagnosed January 2014 with Metastatic Breast cancer, so my treatments will never end. I currently go for chemotherapy for my Herceptin and Perjeta infusions every 3 weeks. The treatments are helping and I will stay on this forever until cancer changes. I’m thankful for that, but, I am sorely in need of feeling good again. I feel like I have lost myself in the battle and want to be restored.

Before this illness I had my own gift shop and loved making others happy and beautiful with the items they purchased at the store. Unfortunately, I had to close my shop because it was too much to take care of with my health. I miss the feeling of helping others. Now, I struggle to help myself feel normal. Being on treatment for cancer is a continued battle for me. I would love to find ways to deal with it better and maybe just get away and forget about it for a few days!

Thank you for considering me for this Empowerment Journey.

Natalie Fluharty

Send Me On Vacation provides healing vacations to breast cancer survivors who have recently completed treatment. The organization believes that the vacation experience has the power to heal the body, mind and spirit and is a critical first step in recovering from the devastating effects of cancer. SMOV combines the resources of the vacation ownership industry with fundraising efforts to send survivors from the U.S., Mexico and Canada on vacations around the world. The organization affiliates with hospitals, cancer centers and other non-profit organizations to change the lives of survivors, one vacation at a time.
So…the question is…
Why Should You CARE?

Written by: Linda Mayhugh, C.A.R.E. President

The Cooperative Association of Resort Exchangers is so much more than the name eludes. The (not-for-profit) trade association, more commonly recognized and referred to as C.A.R.E., emulates the definition of that acronym as a word which is “the provision of what is necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance, and protection of someone or something and further serious attention or consideration applied to doing something correctly or to avoid damage or risk”.

The heart and backbone of C.A.R.E. is their Code of Standards and Ethics that each member agrees to abide by and be bound to. Since 1985, C.A.R.E. has taken every step possible to protect the health and welfare of the overall vacation experience by educating its members and promoting an ethical prowess that ultimately has reduced potential damage, risk and overall harm to our expansive industry.

Managed primarily by volunteer members, year after year this association has been constantly and consistently constructing a puzzle. A puzzle that truly will never be complete; but always evolving around the curve of worldwide economics and an eclectically fast paced and ever-changing industry. A puzzle that nearly every resort, hospitality, timeshare and vacation service organization can beneficially be a piece of as a member or a supporter that shares the same initiatives and goals. And hopefully...a puzzle that we all want to help construct.

So…again...the question is...Why Should You CARE? You should CARE because...We all will succeed or fail by living up to the definition of that word. That's likely a valid decree no matter what business you are in; however, our industry is more highly scrutinized and with good cause. There is a lot of good, but there is still a lot of work to be done to clean up the bad (reputation) left by many that didn't CARE.

When we switch from the word to the acronym, the answer to the repeated question herein is...you should (join or participate in) C.A.R.E. if you want to do business with others who CARE and want to honor and uphold ethical business transactions. It's not about who you are competing with, it's about honestly and ethically bringing more to your bottom line and participation in C.A.R.E. can help many do that on multiple levels.

You should C.A.R.E. if you are you ready to create a new revenue source for that excess, unsold and/or delinquent resort week inventory. You should C.A.R.E. if you are a club or travel agency that is in search of more weekly resort rentals to increase vacation fulfillment opportunities. C.A.R.E. could be the conduit that you’ve been searching for...we’ve got inventory buyers and sellers ready to make new connections attending every conference. C.A.R.E. members can share inventory via week-to-week exchanges, weekly wholesale rentals, guaranteed and free-sale blocks as well as year-round and seasonal leases all over the world. C.A.R.E.'s Supplier Search System (See advert on inside back of this edition) offers an easy and automated online platform that conveniently brings all these opportunities to fruition for C.A.R.E. members.

C.A.R.E. conferences are also a great value proposition for those service related entities looking for new business partners. Many C.A.R.E. conference attendees are always in need of value-added benefit enhancements to strengthen their core missions.

For more information about how you can “C.A.R.E.” visit our website www.care-online.org, email us at info@care-online.org or give us a call at (800) 636-5646.

Even if you don’t contact us about C.A.R.E., it is our hope that you will do your part to take CARE of our ill reputed global industry.
why should you CARE?

Are you a Developer, HOA, Resort, Management and Exchange Company, Travel Club, Wholesaler or other Affiliate? Are you looking to provide opportunities for vacation fulfillment, exchanges and revenue enhancement through increased inventory utilization and yield management? You should consider a membership in C.A.R.E., The Cooperative Association of Resort Exchangers. We are the vacation industry’s premier trade association promoting ethical and outstanding vacation services by providing education and networking opportunities within our membership.

Please join us at our 66th conference held in Austin, TX
April 7-10, 2018.
National Timeshare Owners Association Confirms Strategic Partnership With AMDETUR

NTOA, the National Timeshare Owners Association, is proud to announce that it has entered into an Industry Association Partnership Agreement with La Asociación Mexicana de Desarrolladores Turísticos (AMDETUR), the Mexican Resort Development Association.

NTOA is the premier association giving a united voice to the nearly 8 million timeshare owners in the United States and Canada. With strong owner advocacy and education programs, the organization has encouraged countless owners to explore all the uses and benefits of timesharing for the past two decades.

AMDETUR is a tourism industry organization that acts as a liaison between federal, state, and municipal authorities and private enterprise in the Timeshare and Vacation Ownership sector, a part of the tourism industry that has seen a steady growth of 4% a year since 2009. The association represents 90% of resort developers and investors in the Mexican Timeshare and Vacation Ownership industry.

As part of the partnership, each association has agreed to numerous reciprocal benefits that include cross-memberships, registrations at their respective conferences, and multiple options of visibility in publications, conference collateral and websites. In addition, the NTOA will be working with the executive team at AMDETUR supporting consumer related tourism initiatives.

NTOA, which is celebrating its 20th Anniversary recently expanded into Mexico and began working closely with a number of resort organizations based in Cancun, Los Cabos and Puerto Vallarta. Gregory Crist, CEO of the NTOA said, “American and Canadian consumers, owners and members now have an extra voice in Mexico. We are very proud to be working with AMDETUR in this special new relationship. Mexican tourism has grown by 50% since 2012 and currently ranks 8th in the world, just behind the U.K. The vacation ownership industry is a significant driver to this continued growth and we hope to help encourage more timeshare owners to explore the many offerings Mexico has to offer.”

Mr. Carlos Trujillo, Executive President of AMDETUR said: “We believe it is a great opportunity working together with all kind of associations involved in the timeshare industry, but we find this relationship especially interesting, because it is the first time we are doing it with a consumer-based association. It will be beneficial for both entities and will provide AMDETUR with valuable insights on one of our main markets”

Mr. Trujillo also added that “NTOA has proved to be a very strong association and that this reciprocal relationship will result in a win-win scenario”.

National Timeshare Owners Association Confirms Strategic Partnership With AMDETUR
Mobile applications make all of our lives easier, but when it comes to the satisfaction of hotel guests, they’re starting to become just as important as down comforters, extra towels, and a fully stocked minibar.

Simply put, you can’t woo customers with free HBO anymore. As hotels finally step into the modern age, they’re realizing that their mobile applications shouldn’t be considered an afterthought. Hotels who have intuitive mobile apps and offer a streamline user experience are now viewed more favorably in the eyes of travelers. However, the hotel industry needs to step up their game. More consumers are using their smartphones to book trips, which is bad news for hotels and resorts who lag behind the competition when it comes to their mobile footprint. According to the J.D. Power 2017 North America Hotel Guest Satisfaction Index Study, in 2014, 14-percent of trips were booked using a smartphone or tablet, that number is now up to 25-percent with younger and business travelers leading the way. Most travelers who use their smartphones to book trips do so by using an online travel agency (OTA). Although OTAs like Expedia, Travelocity, and Booking.com offer lower prices and are extremely convenient, these “hot deals at the click of a button” are not all they’re cracked up to be. J.D. Power’s study shows that when consumers book through an OTA, their satisfaction level drastically decreases.

Hotels and resorts are well aware of customers’ dissatisfaction when they book through an OTA, so there has been a marketing push in recent years to convince travelers to book directly through them instead of an OTA. Despite being less satisfied with their trip when they book through an OTA, people; especially younger travelers, continue...
to use OTA apps to plan vacations, because they’re easy to use and tend to offer the biggest bang for a leisure traveler’s buck. However, the big names in the hotel industry are finally seeing the importance of having an app that not only offers their customers a simple way to book, but an entire user experience that includes checking-in, checking out, and even the ability to have towels and clean linens sent to their room. If travelers are presented with a hotel app that is just as easy to use as an OTA and offers even more features, consumers will be more likely to book directly (something that the hotel industry has been encouraging travelers to do since the rise of OTAs), thus their satisfaction increases, because they no longer have to deal with the red tape of a third party which is often the cause for customer dissatisfaction. If a traveler booking directly with a hotel is satisfied, they are also more likely willing to join the hotel’s loyalty program and in turn they will continue to book future trips directly with the hotel.

Hotel rewards members aren’t just proud of showing allegiance to their hotel chain of choice, they’re also big fans when it comes to downloading and frequently using the hotel’s app. An astonishing 70-percent of hotel rewards members are said to have a hotel’s app on their smartphone compared to a paltry 19-percent of non-member guests. It’s no surprise that the hotel chains who top customer satisfaction lists are the ones who have apps that travelers want to use. The Ritz-Carlton (tied with JW Marriott) is the top hotel in the luxury segment and has an app that not only is easy to use, but is a perfect example of the Ritz-Carlton brand. Ritz-Carlton’s app is more like a mobile concierge where guests can not only check-in and out, but view curated restaurant and entertainment suggestions as well as the ability to book more stays, and access their rewards portfolio. Clearly, Ritz-Carlton guests demand this level of quality in an app, but even guests of lower tier hotel chains should expect a trouble-free experience when using a hotel’s app.

Because the industry is playing catch-up when it comes to connecting their guests with a user-friendly app experience, marketing firms like Orlando, FL-based INTUITION Brand Marketing are leading the way by offering hotels and resorts detailed solutions to help engage with today’s consumer-driven travel industry. Being able to understand your areas of success and areas for improvement are essential to understanding what can set you apart from competitors; and the latest technologies certainly assist with this” says Paul Mattimoe, President & CEO, INTUITION Brand Marketing LLC.

“As hotels finally step into the modern age, they’re realizing that their mobile applications shouldn’t be considered an afterthought.”

Hotels and resorts need to realize that the relationship with a guest doesn’t end when their stay is over. When a guest downloads a hotel’s app, it plants the seeds for future bookings, and positive reviews on social media. It’s up to the hotel to water it by offering all of their guests advanced mobile apps that help with their brand’s image.
El Cid Resorts Announces its Newest Luxury Property in Cancun Riviera Maya

El Cid Resorts, a staple of México’s hospitality and cultural experiences, is thrilled to announce the highly anticipated debut of its new, all-inclusive property, Ventus at Marina El Cid Spa & Beach Resort Cancún Riviera Maya, set to open its doors in November 2017. This next generation resort is El Cid’s seventh property in México, and follows the success of its sister property, Hotel Marina El Cid Spa & Beach Resort, also in Cancún Riviera Maya, along with several other properties located in Mazatlán and Cozumel.

Situated along the coast between Cancún and Playa del Carmen, this modern beachfront property boasts 290 luxury designed suites with private balconies, each ranging from 575 to 2,854 sq. ft. Ventus at Marina El Cid Spa & Beach Resort also has an expansive full-service spa, a 2,088 sq. ft fitness center, two infinity pools, a 3,675 sq. ft. main pool with children areas, two adult-only jacuzzis, gourmet eateries, state-of-the-art convention centers and five beautiful wedding venue options.

“El Cid Resorts have been accommodating guests for over 40 years across México, and we’re thrilled to introduce our newest property to visitors from around the world,” said Carlos Berdegué, President and CEO of El Cid Resorts. “This stunning resort is an exciting addition to our El Cid portfolio, as it boasts not only breathtaking views and surroundings, but also provides a modern approach and feel to cultural and traditional experiences that will keep visitors returning year-after-year.”

The resort was designed by the team headed by Fernando Berdegüe Sacristán, VP of Construction and new product development, providing top-notch expertise in constructing sleek, modern and comfortable concepts and designs.

For Ventus at Marina El Cid Spa & Beach Resort, the team worked with award-winning design + architects, Ezequiel Farca and Cristina Grappin. Known worldwide for their quality, vision and exceptional craftsmanship, Farca and Grappin’s designs for Ventus are a perfect blend of timeless design and comfortable functionality, as they used natural materials, elegant details and aesthetics, which are key features of the El Cid brand.

“While building this resort, we had nothing but sophisticated details in mind, as we focused in creating our signature scent, to developing our unique spa treatments, the design of each suite, our gourmet dining options, and our one-of-a-kind adventures and excursions,” Berdegué continued. “As Ventus at Marina El Cid Spa & Beach Resort is located next to its sister property, Hotel Marina El Cid Spa & Beach Resort, our guests are welcome to enjoy both resorts’ amenities, allowing access to each property’s pools, restaurants, bars and more.”

Gourmet Dining & Lounges

Guests will have the choice of many dining options, ranging from eateries to several gourmet restaurants and bars featuring cuisines from around the world, along with exquisite wine and beverage offerings at Ventus at Marina El Cid Spa & Beach Resort. Guests also have the option of dining next door at Hotel Marina El Cid Spa & Beach Resort (restaurants listed below).

World Class Restaurants at Ventus at Marina El Cid Spa & Beach Resort Include:

- île de France – authentic French fine-dining experience with a superb gourmet ala carte menu.
- Mercado de Dolores – Enjoy authentic flavors and ambience in this one of a kind market where all guests will be tempted by seven distinct cuisine specialties that include authentic delicatessen fare, seafood, Italian, Thai and amazing desserts.
- Pizzeria Il Peccato – delight your palate with the rich flavors and textures from Italy.
- Sea Place – the finest seafood you can enjoy, and our guests’ window into the delicious bounty of the Caribbean.
- Maiz – an array of authentic Mexican cuisine to spark cultural inspiration.
- Wok Asian Cuisine – enjoy an Asian infused menu – unique noodle and rice dishes are just the beginning of the delicacies that will be offered.
- Fresko – choose from an array of perfectly light menu options – try one of the crisp, healthy salads, paninis and much more.
- La Crèpe – sweet and savory are the stars on this menu. There is always room for dessert, which makes this a must visit while staying at Ventus.
- Aromas – wake up to the comforting aroma of freshly ground coffee and delicate specialty teas. For a sweet treat, indulge in Ventus’ own gelato.

Lounges and Bars include:

- Macondo ocean deck bar – offers guests international beverages and tropical cocktails, while delivering a relaxing view of the infinity pool.
- Abnia – the elegant lobby bar.
- Zanza lounge bar – located between the two main pools with live music in the afternoons, ranging from reggae to jazz, and more.

Hotel Marina El Cid Spa & Beach Resort Restaurants Include:

- El Alcazar – Asian-Mediterranean Fusion
- La Alhambra – International Buffet
- Hacienda Arrecife – Mexican Specialties
- La Marina – Fresh Seafood
- La Trattoria Di Gulio – Caribbean meets Mediterranean

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Innovative Vacation Ownership, Hotel & Resort Conference announces Will Blackmon, an NFL safety and return specialist as a Guest Speaker for the upcoming 2018 event in Miami Florida.

The Global Networking Experience, commonly known as GNEX Conference is synonymous with attracting senior-level hospitality industry executives to different stunning locations each year, creating unique business-making environments, pushing the envelope with interactive general sessions and delivering spectacular social events.

As part of a new format for 2018, organizers have secured Will Blackmon to speak to the mostly C-Level audience about “The Art of Resiliency – Setbacks, Obstacles & Tragedy”.

“I am excited to share my story with hospitality professionals from around the world who can relate to my experiences and adopt some of my mindset into their leadership so that they can help build winning teams in their organizations.” Says Will Blackmon, NFL Player.

Will Blackmon, currently a free agent, has already played 10 seasons in the NFL, formerly for the Washington Redskins, Seattle Seahawks, Jacksonville Jaguars and Arizona Rattlers. Earlier in his career, he played college football for the Boston College Eagles, and was drafted in the fourth round of the 2006 NFL Draft by the Green Bay Packers. He also won a Super Bowl ring when playing for the New York Giants after defeating the New England Patriots in Super Bowl XLVI.

“We are privileged to have such a talented and inspirational athlete join us for our 8th annual GNEX Conference.

I know the sports fans in our audience will enjoy the opportunity to meet Will, but more so, I know that all attendees will be inspired by his story.” Says Paul Mattimoe, President & CEO, Perspective Group – who produce the GNEX Conference.

GNEX 2018 which heavily focuses on networking to facilitate new business opportunities amongst its attendees, also promises to deliver even more compelling content; appropriately aimed at its senior-level audience.

In addition to guest speakers such as Will Blackmon, the event is also introducing “X-TALKS”, where the “X” stands for Xpert, Xperience or Xcellence.

Largely replacing the previous format of hour-long open forum Q&A Panel sessions, the “X-Talks” will comprise of a solo speaker for a limited time of just 10 minutes. Each speaker will qualify as an Xpert, or have significant Xperience or has exuded Xcellence related to their session topic.

These information packed, bite-sized sessions will deliver valuable opinions, data and insights for attendees on many varied topics, while creating extended time and flexibility for networking and planned meetings.

The conference will also include, a Keynote Speaker, Guest Speakers, planned Networking Sessions, Cocktail Hours, two Social Events and more...

GNEX 2018 will be held on the world’s first mega-yacht venue, the $40 million, 228ft SeaFair Grand Luxe that recently completed a further $10 million renovation to provide a truly unique event venue that boasts more than 22,000 square feet of meeting space.

Signature Sponsors for the event are: DAE, Holiday Systems International and INTUITION Brand Marketing.
Additional sponsors include: Send Me On Vacation, VacationCondos.com, Resort Management Services, Resort Travel & Xchange, Wyndham Vacation Resorts Asia Pacific, Canadian Vacation Ownership Association, Cooperative Association of Resort Exchangers, National Timeshare Owners Association.

For more information and to register for the event, visiting http://gnexconference.com/register

To request a sponsorship brochure, visit http://gnexconference.com/sponsorship

About GNEX Conference
With a new destination every year, a heavy focus on networking, high-quality events, and innovative format, GNEX Conferences attract senior-level executives from more than 130+ companies across the globe.
Latin America
AMDETUR Update

AMDETUR Celebrates its 30th Anniversary

The Mexican Resort Development Association (AMDETUR) and the Association of Tourism Timeshare Developers and Promoters (ADEPROTUR) joined forces to hold the organization’s 31st annual convention. The event held in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico also marked AMDETUR’s 27th annual expo, and included a special marketing and sales forum titled “Awakening and Transcending.”

The event was held from June 20-22 at Hotel Sheraton Buganvillas Resorts & Convention Center in Puerto Vallarta and brought together leading personalities from the timeshare and vacation ownership industry. Resort developers like Abelardo García Ramírez, Ernesto Coppel Kelly, Fernando González Corona, Kemil Assad Rizk Aziz, Pablo González Carbonell, Pablo and José Carlos Azcárraga, Owen Perry, Gabriel Macías Dueñas, and Alejandro Zozaya were all present to share their personal experiences and industry insight with participants.

AMDETUR celebrated its 30th anniversary during the event and held its expo called “Three Decades Transforming Tourism in Mexico”, and the Puerto Vallarta and Riviera Nayarit marketing and sales forum “Awakening and Transcending.” The Association of Tourism Timeshare Developers and Promoters (ADEPROTUR), is not only one of AMDETUR’s founders, but has been fundamental to the timeshare and vacation ownership industry’s development in the Puerto Vallarta-Riviera Nayarit region. Its support in the organization, operation and logistics of the event made this year’s conference one of the most successful on record.

Opening Ceremonies

The opening ceremony of the event was attended by Mexico’s Secretary of Tourism, Enrique De la Madrid Cordero, who discussed how important tourism is to fight poverty in Mexico. He noted that the three top vacation ownership countries in the world are the United States, Mexico and Canada—which is a sign of how important timeshare is this region. He urged entrepreneurs to work together to show how this region is destined for global competitiveness based on its natural and human resources. “We must all work together to build a better country,
because together we can achieve more and
together we are worth more." De la Madrid said. He acknowledged the presence and
involvement of international associations
like the American Resort Development
Association (ARDA), the Cooperative
Association of Resort Exchangers (C.A.R.E),
the Canadian Vacation Ownership
Association (CVOA), and the Jamaica
Promotions Corporation (JAMPRO), an
agency of the Jamaican government’s
Ministry of Economic Growth and Jobs.

In his speech, Jalisco Governor,
Aristóteles Sandoval declared that the
innovative capacity of the vacation
ownership industry is the result of its
entrepreneurs’ commitment, leadership,
and professionalism. “It is time for the
government to commit to the industry
so that together we can co-create what
our clients and tourists need, and the
infrastructure that needs to be built.”
Sandoval called on Mexico to grow as a
country and to compete on a global level,
mentioning that Mexico has the capacity to
double the size of its tourist industry.

Pablo Azcárraga Andrade, President of the
National Tourist Business Council (CNET)
pointed out that the vacation ownership
industry is still relatively young, but despite
this, it has shown impressive vigor in recent
years, contributing a solid share of Mexico’s
tourist GDP.

“The development of the vacation
ownership industry has taken place in a
completely natural way, complementary to
and highly compatible with the growth of
the hospitality industry itself.” Azcárraga
argued that the hospitality and vacation
ownership industries strengthen each
other mutually, and that national and
international hotel chains that operate in
Mexico have been tremendously successful
in the vacation ownership segment.

Jorge Herrera Rivadeneyra, Chairman
of the Board of Directors of AMDETUR,
talked about how AMDETUR has gradually
positioned itself as a leading organization in
Mexico over the past three
decades, propelled by the dedication and commitment of the 16 people who have chaired the organization since its founding. “Each and every one of these people have faced challenges in defending the interests of our industry.” Rivadeneyra explained. He also recognized the support of resort owners, local association, and authorities, with a special mention of the current head of the Federal Consumer Protection Agency, Rafael Ochoa, and his work with the Senate Committee and Trade and Industrial Promotion on drafting the new Federal Consumer Protection Law. In drafting this legislation, Mr. Ochoa was able to maintain the 5-business-day cancellation period and avoid obligating timeshare companies to enter a new Public Registry, similar to what pawnbrokers must do.

Maria de Lourdes Ayala, who chairs the Board of Directors of ADEPROTUR, remarked that the Convention was an opportunity to reflect and prove that by acting in unison, we can take actions to transcend and leave a legacy for new generations, a strong industry better prepared to face the future. She added that the vacation ownership industry has the means to transform simple vacations into a life experiences.

Activities
Convention activities kicked off with the university-company connection program, sponsored by the Fiesta Americana Vacation Club, where more than 300 students from universities in the Puerto Vallarta and Riviera Nayarit region met with industry representatives for an overview of the tourist industry and the potential of the world’s vacation ownership industry, particularly in Mexico.

Keynote Speakers
• Overview of Tourism in Mexico
  Overview of Tourism in Mexico was presented by Pablo Azcárraga Andrade, President of the National Tourist Business Council, who described how important AMDETUR’s involvement in the tourism industry is to this country’s development.

He discussed about how Mexico has numerous competitive advantages that distinguish it from other countries like access to international tourists and a large domestic market, which places them in a privileged position.

• Smart Destinations: the Future of the Industry
  Juan Ignacio Rodríguez, Senior Vice President of Business Development and Operations at RCI, spoke on the topic of “Smart Destinations: The Future of the Industry.” One clear example of a smart destination is Spain, which has developed the concept more thoroughly. Rodríguez pointed out that Mexico also has the capacity and investment power to become a leading smart destination.

• The Power of Digital Marketing
  Madeline Berges, Vice President of E-Commerce and Digital Marketing at Interval International discussed “The Power of Digital Marketing,” commenting on the importance of using technology and the way in which information, events or photos today have the power to “go viral” in the digital age.

• The Power of Service
  Miguel Uribe Maeda, conference speaker and service expert, spoke on the topic “The Power of Service,” highlighting strategies for customer service, sales and business development. Uribe explained the keys to success that companies can use to improve their operating results and boost sales, saving money while generating more clients.

• Universal: Bringing Extraordinary Experiences to Life
  Fernando Flores Kato, Vice President of Universal Parks & Resort Vacations, presented “Universal: Bringing Extraordinary Experiences to Life,” He spoke about the origins of theme parks, particularly Universal Studios, which was born out of the film industry.

• Digital Transformation of the Company through Transformation of its Culture
  Jorge Molina, manager of Google Cloud for Google Mexico spoke on the topic of “Digital Transformation of the company through Transformation of its Culture.” Jorge told the gathering that failing to be present in the digital world would cause a company to lose 90% of the opportunities. Digital transformation enables companies to stay fresh, innovative and interesting. Being innovative and developing new ideas means being free of limitations, being able to identify real and artificial obstacles.

Panel Sessions
Pioneers: Evolution of a Vision
Moderated by Ricardo Montaudon Corry, Chairman of the Board and CEO of RCI Latin America, included speakers Pablo González Carbonell, Chairman of the Board of Royal Holiday; Fernando González Corona, Chairman of the Board of Grupo Villa; Ernesto Coppel Kelly, Chairman of the Board of Grupo Pueblo Bonito and Kemil Assad Rizk Aziz, Chairman of the Board and CEO of Royal Resorts.

Panelists spoke about the evolution and transformation of the Vacation Ownership Industry.

• Breaking Paradigms, Creating Unique Experiences
  Moderated by David Fuentes, Speakers were: Jean Pierre Juanchich, Manager of Crystal Lagoons Mexico; Oscar Moreno Leyva, Group Manager for Vallarta Adventures and Roberto Valdés, CEO of Grupo Valcas (Vívelo Rancho Tecate).

Each of these participants shared experiences on how activities and amenities have evolved within their companies to create unique experiences.

• New Opportunities and Challenges in the Digital Age
  Moderated by Jim Wehrle, Vice President of the Cooperative Association of Resort Exchangers (C.A.R.E.), panelists Ryan Williams, Vice President for Business Development at Track Results; Leonel Matiz, Manager of
Consulting and Advisory Services for Tourist-Oriented Real Estate (TORE) at RCI Latin America; Kevin Schneider, CEO of SaveOnResorts; and César Ramírez, Lead National Partner for Tourism and Hospitality Industry at KPMG.

They concluded that the greatest opportunities for development in the vacation ownership industry lie in technologies relating to big data, because these enable companies to better know their clients and act in advance of their needs.

• **Regional Perspectives on Tourism**
Moderated by John McCarthy Sandland, Managing Partner of Leisure Partners, the panelists were: Jesús Enrique Ramos Flores, Jalisco State Secretary of Tourism; Álvaro Garciace Monraz, President of the Puerto Vallarta Tourism Trust; and Fernando González Ortega, President of the Office of Visitors and Conventions for the Riviera Nayarit.

These professionals pointed out that hotel occupancy levels in the Puerto Vallarta-Riviera Nayarit region are above 80%, which means the area is growing at a brisk pace allowing for investment in hotel infrastructure.

• **New Focuses on the Vacation Ownership Industry**
Moderated by Gerardo Rioseco Orihuela, Vice President of Provac-Grupo Posadas, involved panelists like Alejandro Zozaya, President of Apple Leisure Group; Alejandro Martin, CEO of Palladium Travel Club; Luis Lara González, CEO of Travel Smart VIP Vacations; and Marcos Agostini, Executive Vice President of Global Sales and Commercial Development at Interval International.

These professionals argued that the vacation ownership product has evolved because today's clients have different needs, so companies have been adapting themselves to what their customers require.

**Workshops**
Three workshops were held on specific topics including “The New Consumer: Beyond Millennials”, moderated by Lourdes Ayala Ochoa, Project Director for the Royal Vacation Holiday Club; “New Products: Standing Out in the Market,” moderated by Rosario Rodriguez Rojo, CEO of Royal Holiday Vacation Club, and “Multi-Channel Strategies in Post-Sale Service,” headed by Esteban Arce Riquelé, RSS Business Development and Strategic Accounts Manager for RCI Latin America. The result was a fascinating exchange of opinions and sharing of experiences relating to innovative product development, getting to know new customers, and best strategies for post-sale services.

**Evening Activities**

**GALA DINNER, RECOGNITIONS AND GOLDEN PALM AWARDS**
The first day of activities was topped off by a spectacular gala dinner which included, for the first time, the presentation of the 2017 “Golden Palm” awards, recognizing major companies whose initiatives and programs have promoted the development and growth of the Timeshare and Vacation Ownership Industry.

Winners included Royal Holiday for the Best Social Responsibility Initiative, Posadas for Best Referrals Program and Best Marketing Campaign, Unlimited Vacation Club for Best Product Innovation, Solaz Los Cabos for Best Welcome Package and Best Video Production, and Interval International for Best Loyalty Program.

**MARKETING AND SALES FORUM – “AWAKENING AND TRANSCENDING”**
Sponsored by Mas Vacations, Resort Condominiums International, and Interval International the sales and marketing forum was headed up by two well-known presenters. Alejandra Llamas, from the marketing side, spoke of leadership, productivity, and a creating positive workplace environment. On the sales side, Jeffrey Gitomer addressed issues such as personal growth, professional preparation and training to take advantage of opportunities in world tourism, particularly in Mexico.

Attended by a little over 550 people, the training session was offered to promoters, sellers, coordinators, managers and directors working in strategic areas of the main timeshare and vacation ownership hotel complexes in Puerto Vallarta and the Riviera Nayarit.
Lifestyle Holidays Vacation Club Dominican Republic Receives Five 2017 RCI Gold Crown Award And Other Top RCI Honors

Lifestyle Holidays Vacation Club (“LHVC”), located in Puerto Plata on the North Coast of the Dominican Republic, has received five RCI Gold Crown Awards, one RCI Silver Crown Award, the Diamond Award for Lifestyle’s operations team and a Top Seller Award for 14 Lifestyle sales and administrative executives. RCI, the global leader in vacation exchange and part of the Wyndham Worldwide family of brands (NYSE: WYN), presents awards annually to the top RCI affiliated resorts.


RCI is the worldwide leader in vacation exchange with over 4,300 affiliated resorts in nearly 110 countries. RCI pioneered the concept of vacation exchange in 1974, offering members increased flexibility and versatility with their vacation ownership experience. Today, through the RCI Weeks® program, the week-for-week exchange system, and the RCI Points® program, the industry’s first global points-based exchange system, RCI provides flexible vacation options to its 3.8 million RCI® subscribing members each year. RCI’s luxury exchange program, The Registry Collection® program, is the world’s largest program of its kind with approximately 200 affiliated properties either accessible for exchange or under development on six continents. RCI is part of Wyndham Destination Network and the Wyndham Worldwide family of brands (NYSE: WYN). For additional information visit our media center or rciaffiliates.com. RCI also can be found on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitter.

Vidanta Announces Grand Opening of the Lakes Course at Vidanta Nuevo Vallarta

Vidanta Golf – Grupo Vidanta golf course developer – and KemperSports – the leading golf management company in North America – celebrated the opening of The Lakes Course, the third golf experience in Vidanta Nuevo Vallarta, on Friday, September 22.

Mexico’s leading golf course operator and developer, Vidanta Golf teamed up with Chet Williams, a member of the Jack Nicklaus Design group, to develop the unique and funfilled ten-hole, lighted, par 3 The Lakes Course. It joins the renowned Norman Signature Course and the Nicklaus Design Course as the third golf course at the destination, offering guests the option of enjoying a shorter course during their stay, whether day or night.

“As our history demonstrates, Vidanta is constantly at the forefront of golf and tourism development,” said Iván Chávez, executive vice president of Grupo Vidanta. “We are committed to bringing the best of the industry to our customers, which is why we have developed this first short field experience, unique in its kind.”
2017 ATHOC Industry Conference - “Bridging the Gap”

This year the industry headed off to the Northern New South Wales coast to Salt at Kingscliff. Terrific location for a conference. Close enough, but far enough away! With people flying in from all across Australia and Singapore, it was a great backdrop for 3 days of conferencing and activities.

We heard from a terrific range of speakers from both within and external to the industry. This year’s line up showed a real change to our normal demographic with a number of speakers under 30 giving us brilliant information on how to “Market to the Younger Generation” presented by Ilona Charykova, Social Media Marketing Manager at Wyndham Vacation Resorts; Karri Nicholas, Director of Social Media Management, Send Me Social gave us an overview of the last 20 years of social media, the predicted future and how we can utilise it. This was great information for a room full of people over 50+!! We learnt how Accor Hotels has a Millennial Advisor, Mitchell Cole, who explained his role within the organisation.

Claire Madden, who is a social researcher, engaged us in understanding how to inspire the next generation of staff and teams as well as defining Generation Z and the 7 key factors of the global generation.

Hostplus brought us up to speed on the Underlying Issues of the Global Economy; everyone caught up on the likely changes to our Regulatory Guide 160; Richard Munro from the Accommodation Association filled us in on what was happening in the Accommodation space in general and Julian Clark spoke with us about “what we can learn from boutique hotels”.

The CEO panel was once again the focus of the conference, providing our delegates with an update on what has been happening in the industry and more importantly where the industry is going.

To get the group bonding we took off for an afternoon of Bare Foot Bowls next to the beautiful beach at Kingscliff. Always great to see the competitive nature of the industry at work! ICE put on a fantastic function at the end of the bowls and made sure everyone was well fed and watered.

All functions were thoroughly enjoyed and people definitely made the most of them.
The 2017 ATHOC National Industry Awards

The conference dinner this year also included our annual awards and congratulations to the following:

**Excellence in Customer Service**
Customer Experience Team
Wyndham Vacation Resorts Asia Pacific

**Resort Performer of the Year**
Emily Jelich
Sebel Palm Cove
Accor Vacation Club

**Resort Manager of the Year**
Bradley Conder
Grand Mercure Puka Park Resort
Accor Vacation Club

**Resort of the Year**
Wyndham Resort Denarau Island
Wyndham Vacation Resorts Asia Pacific

**Sales Performer of the Year**
Tatiana Rees
Classic Holidays

**Marketing Team of the Year**
Marriott Vacation Club

**Corporate Team of the Year**
Human Resources Team
Wyndham Vacation Resorts Asia Pacific

**Sales Team of the Year**
ASPIRE In-House Sales Team
Classic Holidays

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**Hall of Fame – Winner for 2017**

**Barry Robinson – CEO and President – Wyndham Vacation Resorts Asia Pacific**

Barry has a career spanning almost 30 years in the hospitality industry and some 14 years in the timeshare industry with a major focus on Australia.

Barry was recognised for his involvement in the development of the timeshare industry in Australia, and for his pivotal role in the growth, implementation of best practices and innovation of the industry over the past 14 years.

“The Hall of Fame recognises individuals in senior management roles who have contributed significantly to the improvement of their own organisation, the timeshare industry and the council,” said Laura Younger, General Manager of ATHOC. “There is no one more deserving of this highest honour than Barry.”

“As a President of ATHOC between 2011 and 2016, Barry provided strong leadership for the organisation. He helped build credibility of the timeshare industry in Australia by fostering a high standard of ethics and adherence to industry best practices.

“His leadership has been recognised in many other areas across the industry. He is passionate about our industry, about delivering a great value product, memorable customer experiences, and is deeply respected by all who work, or have worked, with him,” she added.

Barry has been the driving force behind many significant new property acquisitions and enhanced resort developments, and he has brought a renewed customer focus to the industry. Under his leadership, Wyndham Vacation Resorts Asia Pacific and Wyndham Hotel Group have expanded their portfolios throughout Australia, New Zealand, the South Pacific and South East Asia.

In this region, Barry oversees an asset portfolio in excess of AUD $1 billion with more than 180 hotel and vacation resort properties either open or under development.

“I’m honoured to be inducted into the ATHOC Hall of Fame,” Mr Robinson said. “The Australian timeshare industry is a significant tourism sector and I’m pleased to have had the opportunity to play a small part in its success.”
Beneficium

Beneficium, owner of resort and member management group Classic Holidays, has announced that it has reached an agreement on the sale of its timeshare exchange company DAE, and its software development company @Work International, to RCI part of the Wyndham Worldwide family of brands (NYSE: WYN). The deal is subject to customary conditions precedent, including receipt of applicable regulatory approval.

“We believe that this transaction will mark the beginning of a new positive chapter in Beneficium’s, and Classic Holidays’ own history as we continue to focus on the growth of our core businesses,” said Beneficium Chairman Ramy Filo. “In addition, this is a perfect fit for RCI, and this acquisition will provide opportunity for expansion of both DAE and @Work.”

CEO and founder, Francis Taylor, will stay with DAE as Managing Director. “This acquisition will provide DAE with the resources it needs to fulfil its full potential”, said Taylor. “It’s a great opportunity for the company and its dedicated staff around the world.”

Peter Vanderhorst, Managing Director of @Work International, will also remain with the company. “We see many opportunities for @Work, particularly now it can work in parallel with RCI and its network of customers.”

Classic Holidays Expands with New Bali Resort

Classic Holidays has announced Bali’s Classic Lofts @ Seminyak Square is set to be the latest property to join their international resort portfolio for the Classic Holiday Club.

Located in the seaside suburb of Seminyak, Club members will be able to book into the luxurious property from December, 2017.

Classic Holidays CEO Ramy Filo said the villa-style, 2 bedroom accommodation is their first resort addition in Bali.

“At Classic Holidays, we are always looking beyond our horizons to where our members want to holiday most, and Bali is one of the top destinations in demand,” said Mr Filo.

“We’re thrilled to introduce Classic Lofts @ Seminyak Square to our Classic Holiday Club inventory in Bali which will expand our footprint internationally, giving our member families more availability and more choice of quality holiday destinations.”

Only 6km from Denpasar Airport and just north of the bustling streetscapes of Kuta and Legian, Seminyak is a highly sought-after holiday destination, featuring fantastic shopping, restaurants, bars, beaches and nightlife.

Mr Filo said with Bali being such a high demand destination, Classic Lofts @ Seminyak Square is expected to be a major drawcard for members looking to maximise holiday opportunities through their Classic Holidays membership.
ULTIQA Hotels and Resorts Announces Melbourne Expansion

South East Queensland-based ULTIQA Hotels & Resorts announces its first interstate acquisition with the purchase of management rights to luxury boutique apartment hotel 140 Little Collins operational from early August 2017. ULTIQA Hotels & Resorts, headed by CEO Mark Henry, derives its name from a condensed adaptation of ‘ultra-modern boutique apartments’, currently sets the standard in South East Queensland accommodation with management rights to five exclusive properties in highly desirable locations on the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and Brisbane.

Rebranded to ULTIQA Little Collins, the property is a landmark multimillion-dollar purchase and the first interstate property under the ULTIQA portfolio.

Located at the stylish ‘Paris end’ of Melbourne’s CBD, on the corner of Russell and Little Collins Streets, ULTIQA Little Collins is nestled within a myriad of cafes, bars and restaurants. The property is one block from the elegant boulevard of Collins Street and a short walk to the MCG, Rod Laver Arena, Federation Square, Southbank and the Bourke Street Mall.

This fully self-contained, boutique apartment hotel is part of the redeveloped Melbourne Telephone Exchange building and features 45 stunning one, two and three-bedroom modern and architecturally-designed loft-style apartments.

ULTIQA Hotels & Resorts has become synonymous with an exceptional standard of well-appointed apartments featuring standard inclusions such as full kitchen, European Laundry, separate lounge and free WiFi are dominating the corporate traveller and family markets.

ULTIQA Little Collins will become the jewel in ULTIQA Hotels & Resorts crown following the first interstate expansion announcement. CEO Mark Henry says the property is a perfect fit for the current portfolio. “Within our management rights collection, the decision to purchase 140 Little Collins was an easy one as the property ticks all the boxes that we believe makes an ULTIQA traveller experience.

“This addition addresses our desire to deliver self-contained CBD apartment style accommodation in major metropolitan areas, and is the perfect property to launch the ULTIQA Hotels & Resorts Brand into the thriving Melbourne market,” Mr Henry said.

Parent Company, ULTIQA Group, is a joint venture partnership between the South African Beekman Group and Gold Coast based Mark Henry, and are actively seeking to expand their property base into other major metropolitan regions along the eastern seaboard of Australia.

Ramada Hotels Partner with Professional Golfers Association

New Zealand’s Professional Golfers Association (PGA) has chosen Ramada Resorts and Hotels as its official accommodation supplier for the next three years.

Under this new partnership, the PGA will be able to book at all existing Ramada properties across New Zealand at a preferred rate. Ramada will also financially support the PGA’s program of coaching golfers with disabilities, sponsor the South Island Legends Tour and provide a bonus prize to the Order of Merit winner.

Matt Taplin, Senior Vice President Resort Operations and Property Development at Wyndham Hotel Group South East Asia and Pacific Rim, said the partnership between two iconic brands is a momentous one.

“The partnership unites our managed and franchised hotels and resorts in a move that we believe will raise the profile of our Ramada brand while providing the golfing community with quality lodging whilst on tour,” said Mr Taplin.

Upcoming Launch of Full Cruise Rewards Program for flybuys Travel

ICE are excited to announce the upcoming launch of a full cruise rewards program for flybuys Travel in the last quarter of 2017.

Leading global cruise reward providers I.C.E (International Cruise & Excursions) will bring extensive industry knowledge, innovative technology and superior call centre services to flybuys Travel.

With over 300 leading partner brands worldwide this new flybuys partnership will add an exciting dimension to ICE’s already impressive portfolio, offering flybuys customer’s competitive prices, an array of exclusive deals and opportunities to earn accelerated flybuys points on cruises. For ICE it’s another opportunity to bring cruise & travel products to the market, and to showcase their award winning customer service.
Anantara Vacation Club Launches Loyalty Partnership with Asia Miles

Anantara Vacation Club is pleased to now offer more opportunities than ever before to its upper-tier Club Points Owners. Elite Diamond, Platinum and Royal Club Points Owners will have the opportunity to embark on a new journey with Asia Miles. This partnership enables Club Points Owners to enjoy a wide range of options on excellent travel and lifestyle offers from Asia Miles partners.

“Our new partnership with Asia Miles is a great benefit for our Club Points Owners,” said Maurizio Bisicky, Chief Commercial Officer. “With the ability to convert their Club Points into Asia Miles, Club Points Owners will enjoy greater flexibility and diversity for their travel and entertainment plans.”

Under the new partnership, Anantara Vacation Club Elite Diamond, Platinum and Royal Club Points Owners will have the option to convert their Club Points into Asia Miles with Asia’s top travel rewards program. Club Points Owners will be able to receive 2,500 Asia Miles for every 1,000 Anantara Vacation Club Points they choose to convert.

Asia Miles is the leading travel and lifestyle rewards program in Asia with over 700 program partners worldwide. The program aims to deliver Life Rewarded and offers members extensive opportunities to earn miles through daily spending on a wide range of travel and lifestyle categories, including flights, hotels, dining, financial services, retail, technology and more. In addition to redeeming miles for flight awards to over 1,000 destinations, Asia Miles members can also turn their miles into fabulous awards such as hotel stays at 60,000 hotels, car rental services in 20 countries and over 35,000 lifestyle and experience awards. For more information, please visit asiamiles.com.

RCI Adds Two New Resorts to Affiliate Network in China

RCI, the worldwide leader in vacation exchange (NYSE: WYN), recently welcomed two new affiliate resorts in China to its exchange network – Blue Bay International Resort and Fujian Wuyi Hot Spring Resort. With these additions, RCI’s portfolio in China now boasts over 60 properties. This agreement allows 3.8 million RCI members to access vacation exchanges in China.

“We believe that timeshare is currently the new preferred way of consumer leisure travel and are confident that our partnership with RCI will boost Hooray Island’s presence in the international market. We know that RCI is the right partner for our brand given its 40 years in the business,” said Mr. Luo, CEO of Hooray Island Resorts World.

“Vacation ownership continues to lead in the hospitality and leisure industry with steady growth, and China continues to be one of our core markets,” said Jonathan Mills, managing director of RCI Asia Pacific. “I am delighted to announce these new affiliations, underscoring RCI’s focus on developing this market.”

The new affiliated properties include:

1. Blue Bay International Resort

Located in the Gulei Economic Development Zone in the southern coast of Zhangzhou, Fujian, Blue Bay International Resort features scenic beaches, lush forests and tranquil lakes. In addition to its beautiful natural surroundings, the resort also boasts an 18-hole championship golf course with premium golf club amenities, five-star hotel accommodation and MICE facilities, an RV campsite, a world-class water theme park and a yacht club. With the completion of the Coastal Chase Road targeted to end by 2018, Blue Bay International Resort will be a 50-min drive away from Xiamen.

2. Fujian Wuyi Hot Spring Resort

Fujian Wuyi Hot Spring Resort is a well-designed boutique resort hotel located in Wuyishan, the southeastern part of China, a popular destination for domestic travelers. Comprising 25 units scheduled to open end 2017, each unit is equipped with en-suite hot spring tubs, in-room sauna and spa facilities. The resort boasts two on-site restaurants, 108 natural hot springs and a swimming pool. The resort is a 50-minute drive from The Wuyi Mountains, a UNESCO World Heritage Site rated for its cultural, scenic, and biodiversity values. All resort rooms are decorated with environmentally-friendly material, reflecting the natural theme of the resort, and giving the space a sense of place.

For more information, visit www.RCI.com or www.RCIAffiliates.com.
Europe, Middle East & Africa
This year we returned once again to the beautiful Don Carlos Leisure Resort & Spa located in gorgeous Marbella. For the duration of the conference we were treated to perfect blue skies. Of course this is what we’ve come to expect from this amazing area of Spain; it is the Costa del Sol after all! Attendees were treated to exceptional service, delicious food and drink, excellent entertainment and a stunning resort both inside and out, all bathed in glorious sunshine. The Don Carlos Resort is modern and luxurious, proving once again to be the perfect venue for the annual RDO Conference.

For this year’s conference, the theme “Together, Towards, Tomorrow” was chosen, because we strongly believe that the best way for our industry to face the challenges of the future, is to work together. Collectively we have one of the strongest organisations within the travel and tourism industry and we are extremely proud of how much our members support each other. While there are tough challenges ahead, we are confident that together we can overcome these and not only survive but thrive, as part of the globally booming travel and tourism sector of the economy.

The conference was once again opened by RDO chairperson, Susan Crook, Director of Legal Services and European General Counsel at Diamond Resorts (Europe) Limited. Susan began her tenure as RDO chairperson at the November 2015 Board Meeting, then opened up RDO7 conference in London last year. We look forward to continuing to work with Susan during her time within this role which she has proven to be excellent at.

We wish to extend our thanks to our Platinum sponsors, CLC World Resorts & Hotels, Diamond Resorts International, Interval International and RCI, our Gold level sponsors, Dial An Exchange, Generator Systems and Shawbrook Bank, to the conference working group and to Robin Mills, who once again did an outstanding job as conference moderator. Each year Robin brings his wealth of industry knowledge to the conference, that
he uses superbly to stimulate debate and engage with delegates.

Keynote speakers
This year we had a brilliant line-up of keynote speakers who each brought something completely unique and inspiring to the event. To kick off proceedings in energetic style, RDO attendees were treated to a fantastic and lively session by Chris Barez-Brown. The mood of Chris’ style of presentation was set right from the start when he asked everyone to stand up, turn to their neighbour and give them a hug. Of course from then on, we couldn’t help but to feel enthusiastic!

The theme of Chris’ session is entitled ‘Upping Your Elvis’, inspired by Bono’s signature question “who’s Elvis round here?”. In other words “who here is a bit of a maverick, breaks the rules, gets stuff done?”. While it might seem that this is fixed within only a rare few, in fact Chris believes that everyone has a bit of Elvis inside them just waiting to be released. His session was centred around helping attendees to learn how to think more creatively, shine more brightly and have more fun in everything they do and then in turn pass this energy onto their resort teams.

This was a session filled with enthusiasm and fun which included attendees standing up and telling their neighbour a made up story on the spot, making paper planes and flying them at the stage, and writing down where they have their most creative thoughts! Almost everyone was in agreement that their most creative ideas and thoughts come while doing some kind of activity like walking, cycling, or even in the shower. By contrast it seemed no one felt most creative while stuck in an office meeting or staring at their computer.

The gist of what Chris was getting at was clear: to think more creatively we need to challenge the status quo of how things are traditionally done within most businesses and mix things up, have more fun and inject more energy into our lives. For many of us we are almost stuck on auto-pilot, merely going through the motions of life and not realising our true potential as the creative individuals we can all be. This was a wonderful start to RDO and got everyone geared up for a brilliant couple of days of creativity and motivation!

Nigel Risner, a highly acclaimed motivational speaker with many years of experience once again returned to the RDO, to deliver another powerful presentation. He is the only European motivational speaker to have been awarded Speaker of the Year from The Academy for Chief Executives, and he certainly didn’t disappoint at this year’s RDO. Nigel offered a huge amount of humour and enthusiasm, like Chris, but his approach is also quite different. Nigel aimed to shake up the audience and get them out of their comfort zones with the shocking realisation that things as they are aren’t working. Like it or not, the travel and tourism industry has changed forever, and Nigel wanted to strongly emphasise this, because he believes that without adapting, times could get a lot more difficult for the timeshare industry.

He highlighted both positive experiences he has had with businesses, such as one of his favourite food restaurants in America, and by contrast a very strange and negative experience he had at an electrical store in the UK. What these two instances showed more than anything is how businesses need to adapt and serve the customer, because if the customer is not happy they will quickly find somewhere else to spend their money. Not only will they not recommend your business, but a bad experience will also cause your customer to actively criticise your service.

A big part of Nigel’s message was that people are not all the same and in fact fall under four broad categories of personality:
Later, working as a tennis coach he
ambitions of playing at Wimbledon. Much to his doctor’s surprise, and even had
him he was able to overcome the disease, Despite the odds being stacked against
he loved tennis and movement in general. Tennis in the back garden. Jamie realised
to motivate him so persuaded him to try
and his family, but his mother wanted
This of course was shocking news for him
up enough money for a
deposit on a house and live the ‘normal
life’ that seemed so out of reach when he
was younger. At the final moment when it
came to sign though, he decided he didn’t
want to follow that path and instead took
the decision to cycle the 14,000 miles from
Bangkok to his hometown Gloucester, to
raise money for the hospital that had cared
for him when he was a child. During this
time he was shot at, faced starvation and slept rough, but he made it and raised a lot
of money in the process!

Just a few days after this he decided to
attempt to break the world record for
static cycling, again to raise money for
charity. He not only beat the record, that
had previously stood at 224 hours and
24 minutes, but smashed it, managing
to pedal for a world record breaking 268
hours – more than eleven days. This was
an absolutely incredible feat of human
endurance! Not only had Jamie at one time
been faced with never walking again, but he
had previously never been a strong cyclist.

This got him thinking about what else he
could achieve if he just put his mind and
courageous. This is because the type of
communication that works with one person, will not necessarily work
with another because of these different personality traits. Businesses and their
leaders need to become more adaptable
in order to be able to survive the huge changes and challenges that exist due to
top technology. By adhering to what Nigel
suggests though, this is definitely possible.

Jamie McDonald, our third keynote
speaker at RDO8 delivered a dynamic,
humorous and very emotional presentation
full of tales of adventure and incredible
endurance. What he maybe lacked in terms of polish due to being relatively new to the
world of motivational speaking, he more
than made up for in how he captivated the
audience. Jamie detailed the extremely
tough start in life he had, including facing
a rare spinal disease that saw him forced
to spend a large proportion of his first nine
years of childhood years stuck in hospital.
He was even told by his doctor that there
was a strong possibility that he would be
unable to walk.

This of course was shocking news for him
and his family, but his mother wanted
to motivate him so persuaded him to try
tennis in the back garden. Jamie realised
he loved tennis and movement in general.
Despite the odds being stacked against
him he was able to overcome the disease,
much to his doctor’s surprise, and even had
ambitions of playing at Wimbledon.

Later, working as a tennis coach he
managed to save up enough money for a
to run 5,000 miles from the Atlantic coast
to the Pacific coast across Canada without
the aid of a support crew. He faced -40°C
temperatures, injury, lack of food and
water and other huge setbacks. Despite
everything though, he made it, again
raising a huge amount for charity and
becoming a media sensation, leading to his
current career as motivational speaker.

His main message at the conference was
that everyone can be a superhero, you don’t
need super-hero powers, but you really
can make a difference to other people’s
lives. Jamie is a very humble person and
put across the point that if he can do these
things, then anyone can!

Guest Speakers
Freddie Herbst, commercial director of
BrandsEye, spoke very convincingly about
how brands can use accurate opinion data
to dominate future markets. Nowadays,
brands have access to more data than
ever with social media, blogs, online data
forms and more, but very few are using
this data effectively.

As Freddie explained during his
presentation this is a big mistake for
companies and a huge missed opportunity,
especially in today’s highly competitive
market-place. While there has been
significant growth within the Travel and
Tourism industry in recent years, there is
also heightened competition for hotels
and resorts especially from the likes of
Airbnb which itself uses social media and
technology very effectively.

During his presentation, Freddie showed
how by working with BrandsEye, timeshare
developers can accurately understand how
guests feel about our products, services
and those of their competitors, by using

...this could be a significant opportunity for
resorts to diversify their product to fit this
increasing preference.
they are especially frail or ill, they are not looking to go into a nursing home. Rather, there is a new form of housing being created, that is especially popular in the US: retirement villages.

These differ significantly from nursing homes, because instead they are all about an active shared community offering quality amenities and plenty of things to do. As increasing numbers of Brits and other older Europeans are looking to downsize their main home and acquire another leisure home either in their own country or abroad, this could be a significant opportunity for resorts to diversify their product to fit this increasing preference.

From Daniel Bensley, Business Development Manager at Qubit, we gained a fascinating insight into the company’s latest groundbreaking research into the most effective personalisation and marketing techniques, that when implemented correctly can drive a proven 6% uplift in digital bookings. From this extensive research, brands including those within the timeshare industry can finally understand what works and what doesn’t in eCommerce.

It may seem obvious when looking around, how much mobile technology and high speed internet has shifted consumer shopping habits, but there are still many brands that have failed to have completely grasped the changes underway. Consumer expectations continue to rise as technology improves and becomes quicker. One example Daniel highlighted is how for each year after Uber was introduced into a city, the time someone was prepared to wait for a taxi decreased by a minute. Technology has in many ways made our lives easier, but it has also lead to increasing impatience and consumer demands. As Daniel pointed out, we are now living in an Expectation Economy.

Leisure travel is an experience-based activity, which carries a complicated customer journey. It has long been a dilemma for leisure travel businesses to understand what actually motivates customers to book travel experiences online. The research conducted by Qubit can help brands to drive digital bookings through the most effective personalisation and marketing techniques.

From Geoffrey Breeze, Executive Director of the World Travel & Tourism Council, we were all reminded of how important the travel and tourism industry is for the global economy, accounting for 10% of Global GDP and 1/10 jobs on the planet. This
sector of the economy is absolutely huge and continues to grow year on year with a 3.3% growth in 2016, and a forecast 3.8% GDP growth and 2.1% employment growth in 2017.

The timeshare industry plays a very important role with this huge sector of the economy which all delegates should be proud of. What Geoffrey also wanted to stress, as this is the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, is how there is significant purpose beyond profit.

Not only does travel and tourism create massive profits, but it also creates millions of jobs; 292 million in 2016 in fact! Employment in turn creates a more peaceful and stable world. In addition to the obvious measurable benefits, it is also a bridge to a better mutual understanding among people from all walks of life. This also leads to further peace which is something that should be cherished and fought for. Geoffrey urged delegates to help fight to keep borders open and work with governments to increase freedom of movement and opportunities for all people to enjoy travel.

We learned from Hassan Kadbi, CEO of Hapimag, why he believes “it’s all about the people” as he took delegates on his personal journey. He has a remarkable personal story, having been born in 1978 in war torn Beirut in Lebanon, growing up with the very real threat of devastating explosions. Through incredible dedication and determination though, he was able to work his way up “through the ranks” in the hospitality industry.

He joined Hapimag back in 2005, as a Resort Manager in Bodrum, later becoming Area Manager for Greece, Morocco and Turkey and finally as a Chief Resorts Officer and a Member of the Executive Board. By this point he was responsible for all Hapimag resorts and became CEO in November 2016.

While Hassan worked extremely hard and was completely dedicated to his goals in life, he also strongly made the point to delegates that his journey was not just about him, but also the many people that believed in him along the way and gave him opportunities. While hard work is important, if you do not form valuable relationships with the people around you, then this will only get you so far. As CEO of Hapimag, Hassan aims to strongly instill this sense of community and care within the field of business growth and staff engagement, she has discovered a common problem among many company cultures: the staff simply do not feel motivated enough to see the business succeed.

Some business leaders might look at this and think the staff are being lazy so there should be more discipline or sanctions, or instead persuaded to work harder with incentives. This is exactly where leaders are failing though and Rebecca even saw this within her own company at one point. Instead, staff should be encouraged and supported to have “Stretchy Thinking” i.e. to be able to think outside the box.

Our final guest speaker, Rebecca Jones, also known as the Red Shoe Business Woman, presented the case that many brands and their leaders need to change the ethos within the company. Speaking from her many years of experience for others into every area of the business. As he showed, the brand is focused on so much more than just room nights, but a whole experience for guests to enjoy and cherish, something the timeshare industry as a whole can definitely do going forward.

It is only through trying new things and being able to fail without being made to
look stupid, that businesses expand. In other words, business leaders need to be “enterprise enablers”, by encouraging all staff to draw on their “Enterprise Within”, suggest new ideas, try new approaches and help your business to grow. As your staff feel more comfortable and trusted to make suggestions, they will also appreciate working for your business and see it as more than just a job but instead a career they are proud to discuss with friends and family!

Ask the Lawyers!
At the legal panel session on the Tuesday, Eugene Miskelly, José Miguel Echenagusia, Rob Webb, Paul Gardner Bougaard and Chris Emmins brought us up to speed on some of the most significant challenges the industry is facing at present, and how we are addressing them.

Following the 70+ Spanish Supreme Court rulings on timeshare, the lobby to have the wording of the Spanish timeshare law changed to clear up the mis-interpretation of the Act is now a top priority for RDO. Claims companies have been taking full advantage of the situation and have been actively targeting owners, making assertions such as that all timeshare contracts in Spain have been declared ‘illegal’, which of course is not the case.

As a result, there has been a great deal of behind-the-scenes lobbying on a number of fronts, which we hope will result in a positive outcome for the industry in the year to come. Much of this activity would, of course, have been impossible without the special levy payments made by the vast majority of full members earlier this summer.

Responding to questions from the floor, the panel agreed that whilst now is not the time to go out to the media as just 10 rulings have been made in favour of the industry, a strategy should be launched to communicate with owners, explaining, amongst other things, that there is a lot of misleading and false advertising both online and in print, that their customer data may well have been stolen if they are cold called, that there are considerable risks in taking any court actions (see what is happening in the food poisoning cases), that they don’t necessarily need to pay money to a claims company to achieve the service they require etc. A series of generic messages, it was agreed, would best come from KwikChex, which is Trading Standards accredited and seen as an independent, trusted and impartial third party. This is particularly important as some owners have been under pressure by claims companies to cease all contact with their developer and previous attempts to communicate with them fall on deaf ears.

At a time when there has been a surge of spurious claims against the industry, making life difficult for many developers, RDO has been working closely with law enforcement authorities primarily in the UK but also in Spain, tackling the activities of rogue claims companies. Some arrests have already been made (at this stage we cannot release individual names) and others are imminent.

A gap in consumer protection arose as a result of the TATOC liquidation and the closure of the TATOC Helpline and it made sense for KwikChex to offer an enhanced consumer service, given that it has been handling consumer complaints for some time now. The resulting telephone Helpline serves customers in a number of languages and Trading Standards has been invited to review the service on a monthly basis. RDO members are encouraged to direct owners with queries or complaints about non-member companies to KwikChex.

KwikChex has also been liaising closely with the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO), which, until recently, had failed to react when confronted with evidence that suggested that timeshare owners’ contact details had been stolen. It has, however, now indicated to KwikChex that it is to prioritise the timeshare sector.

RDO has been working closely with law enforcement authorities primarily in the UK but also in Spain, tackling the activities of rogue claims companies.
In addition to a half decade of recognition in North America by the Dow Jones Sustainability Index, Wyndham Worldwide (NYSE: WYN) is for the first time being named a socially responsible leader in Europe through the FTSE4Good Index Series. FTSE4Good measures the performance of companies demonstrating strong environmental, social and governance practices.

Wyndham Worldwide has built Corporate Social Responsibility into its business to deliver great experiences for its customers, results for its shareholders, and service to its communities. Building on five consecutive years of recognition as a Dow Jones Sustainability Index hospitality leader in North America for its responsible business practices, the Company's 2017 inclusion in the FTSE4Good Index series cements its global leadership. The continued improvements that form the basis for these recognitions are reflected in Wyndham Worldwide's newly released 2016-2017 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Report.

"Europe has long been a leader in environmental sustainability and other responsible business practices, so to be recognized by FTSE4Good means our initiatives are increasing the shared value of CSR beyond expectations," said Faith Taylor, senior vice president, corporate social responsibility, Wyndham Worldwide. "Part of how companies achieve their CSR goals is through more effective measuring tools, and after more than five years of reporting, we’re now able to see how holding ourselves accountable translates to business success.”

The annual Wyndham Worldwide CSR report is prepared in accordance with the Global Reporting Initiative and aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals framework. The recently released report highlights accomplishments in 2016-2017, across Wyndham Worldwide’s CSR focus areas: philanthropy, environmental sustainability, human rights and ethics, diversity and inclusion, and associate wellness:

Philanthropy: In 2016, Wyndham Worldwide established a global partnership with Save the Children to improve the lives of future generations around the world. The Company also launched the Associate Relief Fund to help employees in hardship and expanded the Wyndham Rewards point charitable donation program.

Reflecting Wyndham’s culture of giving and service, Wyndham Rewards members donated over 9.9 million loyalty points to charities; more than 5,800 associates participated in at least one full-day volunteer activity; and timeshare owners donated over 120,000 pounds of food to community food banks.

Environmental Sustainability: Efficiency projects and effective measurement enabled the Company to reduce carbon emissions intensity by 33% and water intensity by 20%. Wyndham Worldwide developed real and measurable targets to help address its impact on climate change, and the Company has set a new goal of reducing carbon intensity by 40% and water intensity by 25% from 2010-2025.

Human Rights & Ethics: Wyndham Worldwide is committed to combatting human trafficking and protecting human rights. In partnership with the Polaris Project and ECPAT-USA, Wyndham Worldwide provides owners and franchisees the tools to identify human trafficking through training and awareness campaigns. Wyndham has donated more than two million Wyndham Rewards points to victims of human trafficking to provide them safe places to stay.

In addition, Wyndham Worldwide has established a global network of Compliance Champions to provide guidance for associates on acceptable standards of business conduct, in addition to providing leadership development programs to embed compliant and ethical decision making into everyday business. As a result, the Company has been named one of the World’s Most Ethical Companies by Ethisphere.

Diversity & Inclusion: Diversity is at the heart of what Wyndham Worldwide does: travel enables people of varied nationalities and backgrounds to meet and experience different cultures, raising our collective understanding and appreciation for each other around the world. Wyndham Worldwide is a recognized leader in diversity and was named among the DiversityInc Top 25 Companies for Diversity in 2016, marking the fifth year in a row of the Company’s inclusion the Top 50. Continuing our commitment to diversity in our supply chain, we achieved a 13% diversity spend rate last year.
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