

Duff on Hospitality Law

TNT Travel & Technology Conference Explodes Onto the Northwest Scene

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Travel industry and technology experts gathered at the Four Seasons Seattle this past Wednesday to participate in the region's first conference devoted exclusively to the intersection of hospitality, travel and tourism with technology. The TNT Travel & Technology Conference was hosted by the [Hospitality, Travel & Tourism](#) practice group at Garvey Schubert Barer and local angel investment/opportunity facilitator and industry connector Zino Society. I conducted an informal interview of participants and attendees, which I selected randomly via a complex, proprietary algorithm (red wine vs. white wine; preference for mushroom quiches over Vietnamese spring rolls, cocktail napkin or no cocktail napkin) and 100% of respondents indicated the event was an unqualified success.

Garvey owner and chair of the firm's E-Commerce and Technology practice, Scott Warner, and Hospitality, Travel & Tourism Practice chair, [Greg Duff](#), each hosted a panel of experts—Scott, a group of expert technologists and Greg, a group of expert users. The former consisted of representatives from Expedia, Microsoft, Intelity, Sabre Hospitality, Google, Concur Technologies, Urbanspoon, Tnooz and Ascension Software and the latter of panelists from Evergreen Finance Consulting, Virtuoso, Alaska Airlines, Benchmark Hospitality, American Casino & Entertainment Properties, Mandarin Oriental and Holland America Line. See the linked [Conference Program](#) for a more detailed description of the panels and each of the panelists.

Each of the 16 panelists managed to agree in broad strokes on the following overarching themes of the Conference:

- Service to the end customer—the guest—must be the focus for both providers as well as users in the coming years. Slick, elegant technologies will be adopted only if and to the extent they provide a benefit—direct or indirect—to those guests. With travelers visiting an average of 20 websites across four platforms in seven search sessions to come up with a moderately detailed itinerary, it seems likely the wave of the future is aggregation.
- The current state of travel technology, in which travel providers are presented with an fragmented thicket of discrete proprietary systems and platforms that don't interact without considerable technological assistance (and cost), needs to change. By focusing

on the guest experience, technology providers throughout the supply chain may discover the value of cooperation, as well as competition, whether in the form of certain open standards or otherwise.

- There is enough data around now—oceans and oceans—the leading edge of technological innovation will be to filter out the noise and package the remaining stuff in ways that are useful to the travel providers and therefore, ultimately, to the guest(s).
- TSA is a huge bummer.

After the panel discussions, attendees enjoyed five, five-minute pitches from up and coming Northwest travel technology providers: Utrip, BeDynamic, OntheGo, Talk to the Manager and ViableWare. These five presenting companies were selected by Zino from a list of twenty-five potential presenting company candidates. The panelists and moderators voted among the five presenting companies to award the TNT Explosive Idea Judges' Award (Best Investment Opportunity) and attendees voted to award the TNT Explosive Idea People's Choice Award (Best Presentation). OntheGo earned both awards, which I had the pleasure of presenting, separately, to Mr. Drew Morrison. We look forward to seeing many great things from Drew and OntheGo.

As the role of technology in travel is only likely to increase and will in any case certainly continue to evolve, Garvey and Zino will soon begin making plans for a second annual TNT Travel & Technology Conference next fall. If you have interest in participating in next year's Conference (or want more information about this year's Conference), please let [Greg](#) or [me](#) know.

Tags: TNT Travel & Technology Conference, ZINO Society