

What The Whole World Can Learn From Travel Technology - By Greg Abbott, SVP DataArt

- January, 13 2016
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The travel industry is an excellent model of how standardization and simplification can completely alter the landscape of an industry. In a world that is growing more interconnected and having to meet faster demands via technologies that are emerging each day, it pays off to keep it simple.



Planning trips was once a daunting task. Travellers would have to scour and compare information across hotel chains, airlines and other travel servicers, all of which operated with their own standards - making communication in the travel industry extremely problematic.

However, since the late 1950s when the first [Global Distribution System](#) came into play, the travel industry has made unparalleled progress toward developing standards that different sectors of the industry abide by, with demonstrable success. Over the years, booking a trip has gone from three hours to three minutes, according to the [Travel Technology Association](#) (TTA).

The [Open Travel Alliance](#) and industry leaders led the revolution by recognizing the lack of standards and pursuing solutions, taking advantage of the technology wave of the 20th and 21st century. Open Travel provided the travel industry with a standard interoperability language for the distribution of electronic messages using [Extensible Markup Language](#) (XML) that is now widely adopted. This provides a comprehensive and universal “standard” for the transmission of data between travel partners and even their affiliates (Air, Car, Rail, Hotels, Tours and Activities, etc.).

This standardization reform opened up lines of communication across the industry, ushering in a new era of [travel technology](#). Suddenly, travellers could book reservations and tickets with a few clicks or taps on a screen. Travel became less hectic and demanding on customers.

Now the challenge for the travel industry is keeping that momentum going forward in a hyperglobalized, on-demand world. It is the age of smart technology, one in which [cars will soon begin driving themselves and clothes will monitor health](#). Customers are opting more than ever for convenience and transparency.

So how did the travel industry ensure that it used technology to its advantage, rather than its detriment? In order for the industry to continue moving forward, it was imperative that the industry maintained its standards (updating them where appropriate), but used them in innovative ways to keep travel quick, accessible and open.

To that effect, [online travel agencies](#) (OTAs) have effectively made use of existing technology and the advantages standards have afforded the travel industry. OTAs collect information from servicers across the industry and provide that information directly to consumers in one place, allowing travelers to compare accommodations and streamline purchases. According to [a 2015 survey by the TTA](#), about 70% of Americans relied on OTAs to book travel accommodations because the platforms allowed for safe, fast and easy booking.

The leaders of the global technology industry should take note. With all the advances in technology taking place, consumers may be overwhelmed by the options that are opened up to them. They can control garage doors, lights, and refrigerators all with a swipe on their smartphone - but how many apps does it take to accomplish each of these tasks? Consumers don't necessarily want to check in to multiple apps to achieve common purposes, so just as the travel industry simplified with standards, so should the tech industry.

At this year's [CES](#) (Consumer Electronics Show), attendees were inundated in new and innovative technologies; over 3,800 exhibitions were shown. However, with all of these emerging technologies, the tech industry should recall the simplification of the travel industry.

The trend of simplification and communication between services does seem to be emerging in the tech industry, as seen at CES. "This week we saw that devices are no longer just connecting to the Internet, they are increasingly connected to each other," said chairman and CEO of Boingo Wireless David Hagan in a [CES press release](#). The challenge for the tech industry will be to maintain this interconnectedness, perhaps through a cohesive set of standards as done by the travel industry.

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About Greg Abbott

Greg Abbott is a Partner at DataArt, leading the Travel & Hospitality Practice which he formed in 2010. Greg has deep experience in executive sales & travel system operations, with 20+ years in domestic and international online travel industry sector, including entrepreneurship, management, product development, and consulting. His career in travel began in the early '90's while attending the University of California at Berkeley and working at the corporate campus travel agency that was later acquired by STA Travel.

Over his decade with STA Travel, Greg rose to the Director position and later departed to join NEXGEN Travel in Munich, Germany's leading online travel startup, assuming the role of Product Director for nearly four years. While at NEXGEN, his team tackled some of the most unique system and technology challenges in the hospitality & tour operator distribution landscape. On his return to the U.S., Greg joined DataArt as SVP of Travel & Hospitality to lead the charge in building out DataArt's service to leading travel technology companies around the globe. He is a frequent speaker and a thought leader, with a loyal following in the press and social media alike.

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