

Q&A

G2G Collection attracts affluent consumers with charity-centric travel

July 23, 2014



G2G promotional image

By JOE MCCARTHY

Getaway 2 Give is looking to tap into the growing "Conscious Capitalist" movement to provide affluent consumers with ways to give back while traveling.

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Travel experts at the company help clients map out trips to a growing list of destinations and coordinate charitable actions. Through G2G's customizable structure, more than 100 different charities including The Nature Conservancy and Unicef have benefited so far.

"We have a strong authentic 'why' to make a profound impact on hundreds of people and causes and at the same time demonstrate that you can be doing well by doing good," said Rob Vaka, founder and chief giving officer of **G2G Collection**, Atlanta. "We're entrepreneurs with a very strong purpose.

"G2G Collection will continue to find new ways to create impact on hundreds of causes and significance for those who are part of what we're doing," he said.

"We leverage our team's decade long experience selecting and readying these types of amazing residences to ensure consistency of experience."



Rob Vaka, founder and chief giving officer of G2G

In this Q&A, Mr. Vaka discusses the company's origins, discusses its business strategy and outlines the impact it has made. Here is the dialogue:

What was the inspiration behind Getaway2Give Collection?

Our first Destination Club, Equity Estates, began in 2006 and was one of the few successes in the luxury vacation club marketplace during the interesting economic times from 2007-2011. We observed a number of facts that became obvious.

First, that money cannot buy happiness. Second, that experiences really are more important than things. And finally, that many charities often raise a good bit of money during their annual event where a vacation is auctioned yet struggle at other times throughout the year to achieve funding goals.

You see, during that time we were being asked to donate stays in our homes to help charity events raise money. We helped raise about \$750,000 over three or four years doing that. We became endeared to dozens of amazing causes and the passionate people behind them.

Combine that with my being a cancer survivor, father and husband, and Adam Capes (co-founder) being the same sans the cancer, and we had fertile ground to explore a second half of our lives to be grounded in impact and significance, rather than the all-out pursuit of success.

We have a strong authentic “why” to make a profound impact on hundreds of people and causes and at the same time demonstrate that you can be doing well by doing good. We’re entrepreneurs with a very strong purpose.



G2G promotional image

Why does this form of charity appeal to affluent consumers?

G2G Collection is part of the “Conscious Capitalist” movement and provides people with a way to do what many of them are already doing – enjoy luxury vacations that are memorable. The kicker is that we also provide an easy way to give back at the same time.

This type of product/service is becoming one of the key driving factors in purchasing decisions; Toms Shoes, OneHope Wines, and, in its most basic form, Girl Scout cookies are all structured in a similar way.



G2G destination

All things being equal, when a consumer has the option to purchase a product/service that has a means to impact a social cause that they personally care about vs. one that does not, they are speaking with their wallets and choosing the product/service that will create a positive social impact. Combine this with the fact that days of “conspicuous consumption” are over for most people and one can see why G2G is so appealing.

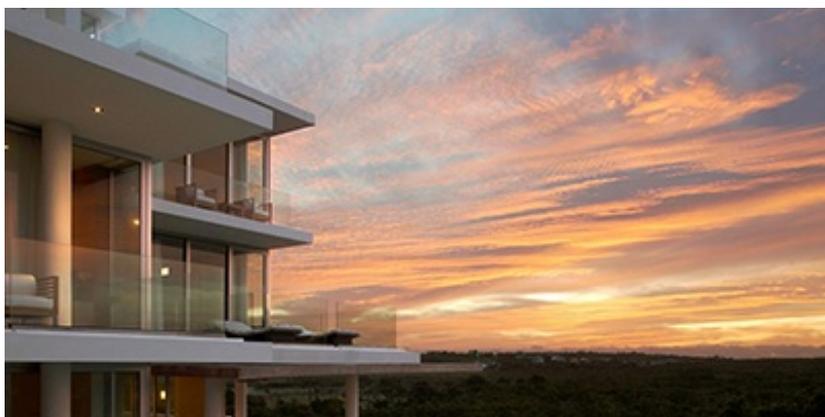
Finally, giving is very personal to many people. Through their G2G membership and travel, members are able to give back to a cause that is important to them, rather than a cause or causes that are pre-selected by an employer or other party.

How does G2G Collection select its partnering hotels and destinations?

The G2G Collection is a combination of private homes, villas, city apartments, resort

residences and experiences like a yacht trip or South African Private Reserve. We're not a hotel discounter and don't have any mainstream hotel options. We're focused on creating access to an ever-expanding set of unique options that, in a good number of instances, the member would not have been able to find on their own.

We select destinations based on the feedback of our members. We regularly ask for feedback on specific destinations and the types of residences in those destinations that they would enjoy most.



G2G destination

For example, we've learned that while larger residences are terrific for particular trips, two to three bedroom options are highly desirable for many. In response we've recently added a slew of these in places such as Miami, the Florida Emerald Coast, Los Cabos and Punta Mita, Mexico. In the next 30-90 days we are launching new mountain/ski destinations for our members to enjoy during the upcoming ski season in Aspen and Beaver Creek, CO.

We leverage our team's decade long experience selecting and readying these types of amazing residences to ensure consistency of experience.

Have certain causes – education, poverty, environmental degradation, etc. – received more attention from consumers than others?

Because members are able to choose the charity that will benefit from their membership and travel, we've had the honor of making contributions to more than 100 different charities.

These organizations range from those focused on advancement in research like JDRF and Cure Childhood Cancer, poverty and hunger programs offered by Create Your Dreams, Safehouse Outreach, and LEAD in Atlanta, educational causes like Pencils of Promise, those providing support for our men and women who've made sacrifices on behalf of all of us like the Wounded Warrior Project, and many more.

We work with charities of all sizes, from those with a staff of one to a staff of hundreds. G2G makes a difference with each, and for those organizations which collaborate with us to leverage G2G as another fundraising tool, we are able to make an even bigger impact. The JDRF Georgia chapter (just one of more than 80 individual chapters) is a fantastic example of this and in a reasonably brief time period we have contributed more than

\$75,000 to this one entity.

How does G2G Collection's voluntourism work? Does the organization set up opportunities for members, or do the participating hotels take care of the details? G2G offers voluntourism experiences on a number of different levels. We believe that each of us is in a different place on the giving back or service journey. For that reason, we have a variety of ways to participate for those who want to intertwine some level of meaningful experience into their vacation or city stay.



G2G destination

In some of our destinations we partner with local organizations and create ways for members to take time from the typical vacation to give back. For example, in Chicago we collaborate with the Lincoln Park Community Shelter. When members arrive at the residence they are greeted with information about the volunteer opportunities available - in this case purchasing the ingredients for a boxed lunch, preparing the lunches, and dropping these off at the shelter. The next level of participation includes the option to visit the shelter and help prepare and serve meals.

Stepping further into the service commitment we offer voluntourism experiences. Different than volunteering for a few hours, these experiences take members to places like Costa Rica and Belize. They spend a few days on a typical vacation and the remaining time working with an organization on projects like building a sanctuary to protect endangered animals or installing stoves to replace more dangerous methods that a Mayan villager uses to prepare family meals.

Does G2G Collection plan to branch out into other product categories?

We are fully committed to doing well by doing good and believe that this business model can apply to numerous products and services. Wine, golf, shoes, event tickets, and other categories are already growing categories in the Social Enterprise world. Our partners at OneHope Wines and tix4cause are great examples of these.

G2G Collection will continue to find new ways to create impact on hundreds of causes and significance for those who are part of what we're doing.

Where do you see G2G Collection in five years?

As a company that is known for its authentic purpose. As the entity to turn to for those who

are passionate about vacations and travel but who believe in the “Give Together Get Together” mantra. As a company that has experienced meteoric growth but has not forgotten its way and its “why.” As a people-centric eco-system keenly focused on helping all of its constituents- members, homeowners, partners, investors, employees and supporters.

Final Take

Joe McCarty, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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