

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

Virtuoso launches digital tool to better connect clients, advisors

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Virtuoso is giving its advisors more tech capabilities. Image credit: Virtuoso

By SARAH RAMIREZ

High-end hospitality network Virtuoso is empowering its advisors with a new planning platform devoted to clients' long-term travel goals.

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Virtuoso's Wanderlist buttresses the relationship between advisor and client with a new visual tool for planning dream trips. Instead of focusing on one trip at a time, Wanderlist provides a future view and encourages clients to be more involved in the planning process.

"Wanderlist was created to help consumers, under the guidance and expertise of a specially trained Virtuoso Wanderlist advisor, transition to a more thoughtful approach by proactively creating a framework for future travels," said Jim Bendt, managing director of **Virtuoso Wanderlist**. "This innovative consulting model allows the client to discover future travel possibilities, unlocking savings as well as insights into their own travel dreams as well as those of their traveling companions.

"At the same time, it allows their travel advisor to go deeper into the planning process by becoming a specialist in their client, while also empowering the advisor to manage their client's travel wish list," he said.

Travelers' Wanderlist

Virtuoso plans for Wanderlist to function as a custom travel portfolio. The hospitality brand was originally inspired by how financial advisors use their personal experience and new technology to better shape their clients' priorities.

After learning that 75 percent of people's "bucket lists" included places they wanted to visit and activities they wanted to experience, Virtuoso developed Wanderlist as a way for clients to organize their travel wish lists.



Travelers can curate their Wanderlists. Image credit: Virtuoso

In addition to collaborating with their advisors, travelers can also create their Wanderlists with friends and families.

Users begin by listing destinations and trip styles they are interested in.

A special portal includes videos, music, stories and other information covering more than 160 places and 1,500 experiences, which travelers can use to better define what trips are appealing. This flow of information helps advisors build a closer relationship with travelers by giving more insight into their personal preferences.

Virtuoso advisors then step in to review their clients' goals. They can use these preferences pulled from travelers and their companions to better organize future travel dates and destinations.



Countries outside the traditional luxury destinations in Europe are gaining in popularity. Image credit: Virtuoso

Furthermore, the Wanderlist is also a cost-effective tool since advisors will be able help clients save money by planning trips ahead of time, instead of paying premium prices for last-minute bookings.

With beta testing completed, advisors can now work to complete their Wanderlist certification.

"The technology is paired with the deep expertise of a Virtuoso advisor who can translate the Wanderlist curation into an actionable travel plan," Mr. Bendt said. "While the technology brings a fun, entertaining way to explore the world and all of its travel possibilities, it's the Virtuoso advisor who takes all of their collective ideas and creates a roadmap to ensure these travel dreamers become travel doers."

Advisors assistance

Instead of being hampered by the advent of technology, hospitality brands are embracing digital tools to better improve the services that their advisors offer clients.

Rather than eliminating the role of the travel agent, technology has actually increased consumers' desire for a human interaction.

While consumers might be hesitant to pay for their services, a travel agent can actually give them more value for their money. Instead of discounts, this may mean perks such as complimentary breakfast.

Working with an agency such as Virtuoso can also give travelers VIP status, something they cannot necessarily validate on their own. Virtuoso's travel advisors serve their clients ahead of the trip, are on-call 24/7 during a trip and check in after the traveler returns for a post-trip debrief ([see story](#)).

Advisors are also an asset when it comes to planning ultra-personalized trips.

While authenticity has been a leading focus for heritage hospitality and travel brands, ultra-personalized experiences are set to overtake it.

For affluent travelers, these personalization requests go beyond upscale accommodations and events and instead include specific meals and personal photographers. Social media continues to play a major role in travel planning, from inspiring some adventurers and motivating others to seek out under-the-radar experiences ([see story](#)).

"Virtuoso has always represented a powerful combination of the power of human connection coupled with the magic of creating customized travel experiences," Mr. Bendt said. "Wanderlist marries these two philosophies seamlessly.

"When clients work with a Virtuoso advisor, not only do they gain access to that advisor's personal connections that inherently lead to better travels, they also build a relationship with their advisor that is rooted in trust."

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