

TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY

## Building relationships with clients, partners key to Northrop & Johnson's 2020 success

October 5, 2020



*Yacht sales are up during the pandemic. Image credit: Northrop & Johnson*

By SARAH RAMIREZ

NEW YORK As luxury travel brands work to respond to the coronavirus pandemic, companies that offer sanctuary to ultra-high-net-worth individuals have risen above the fray.

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In a fireside chat at the Future of Luxury eConference on Sept. 24, an executive from Northrop & Johnson discussed how the yacht company has found success despite the pandemic's harsh impact on the travel industry as a whole. The firm has relied on relationships to thrive, both with clients and partners.

"If you're thinking about what kind of relationship a person has to have with someone to select them as a broker to purchase a \$50 million yacht, you can imagine you have to have a pretty close relationship with those people," said Daniel Wade, managing director and chief content officer at Northrop & Johnson.

"What this company and any brokerage firm is about, it's developing relationships with these people, knowing what their interests are getting close to them and providing the services that they need," he said.

*Future of Luxury eConference was produced by Luxury Daily*

Navigating the storm

Northrop & Johnson is unique as a yacht company as it specializes in the sales, charter, management and insurance businesses.

Despite challenges resulting from the pandemic, Mr. Wade reports that Northrop & Johnson has seen a strong year. He explained that yacht sales were up as UHNWI are looking to purchase vessels for "safe sanctuary," although the charter business has faced issues with destinations being closed to travelers.

In May, the company conducted a client survey to gauge the response to COVID-19.

While clients significantly reduced activities that put them in direct contact with large groups, they also were willing to spend more on things that would allow them to control their environments ([see story](#)). Private jet travel and yachting were beneficiaries of these evolving priorities.



*Northrop & Johnson is partnering with NetJets. Image credit: Northrop & Johnson*

Last fall, Northrop & Johnson and private aviation firm NetJets joined forces to provide perks and expanded travel booking opportunities to each other's clients.

Through the alliance, consumers are able to charter a private jet or a yacht through the partners. Travel companies have been aligning with providers in other categories, aiming to offer an extended array of options ([see story](#)).

Northrop & Johnson also has relationships with Fred Leighton, Corcoran and Northern Trust, among others. These types of partnerships have also been a major focus for the yacht company this year.

"The other aspect of things that we really focused on during this downtime is developing partnerships, which enable us to extend our brand and to get the halo effect from some of these larger brands," Mr. Wade said.

#### Building trust

Luxury travel and hospitality brands must continue engaging travelers and building relationships, as interest in travel is likely to rebound once consumers feel safer.

Industry experts speaking at the Future of Luxury eConference on Sept. 23 shared their predictions for how the hospitality industry will recover after months of shutdowns brought leisure travel to a halt. With government regulations and closed borders still in place, the industry has a longer road ahead than other sectors ([see story](#)).

Additionally, *Cond Nast Traveler* recently launched a new digital hub geared towards affluents who are interested in resuming leisure travel amid the coronavirus pandemic.

"The New Standard" is guided by five principles that luxury travelers expect hospitality brands and destinations to uphold. The editorial initiative was inspired to draw attention to the travel providers working to meet those evolving expectations ([see story](#)).

"There's a tremendous opportunity for marketers to reach these people," Mr. Wade said. "You have to develop a trust by either communicating with them on a regular basis, or by partnering with other brands that they already have strong relationships with and leveraging those relationships."