Explorers' Edge
Naturally Adventurous

11A Taylor Road, Bracebridge, ON P1L 1S6
1 800.835.7303
Algonquin Park, Almaguin Highlands, Muskoka and Parry Sound
www.explorersedge.ca

To: Transacting Committee

From: James Murphy, Executive Director

RE: Online Booking Referral – Reservation System

CC: Marketing Chair

Date: March 17, 2014

RE: Online Booking Referral – Reservation System

Summary:

Traffic to Explorersedge.ca and subsequent outbound link generation to operator & stakeholder sites has grown steadily over the last three years. To further increase consumer interactions (and conversions) with operators, we have embarked on a formal process to select an Online Booking Referral – Reservation System.

To that end, an RFP was issued for implementing a new Online Referral/Reservation system on the Explorers' Edge consumer site.

The RFP process was conducted in an open and transparent manner, and resulted in four responses.

- [Click here to view Online Booking Referral – Reservation System RFP](#)

Visit Us:
Visit Us is part of the TravLynx Group. It is a cloud-based central reservation system allowing consumers to book hotel/ticket packages in a single itinerary (TT would own the end-to-end consumer relationship). Hotel participants connect to the system via Pegasus, Channel Manager, selected PMS or via an extranet. The model allows hotels and activities (attractions, theatre, etc.) to receive a reservation and the consumer credit card information. Each hotel or

activity charges the consumer's credit card according to their individual Terms and Conditions. There are no booking fees assessed to the consumer. The cost for hotel participants is a 10% commission per room night booked. The cost for activity participants is a 12% commission on the tickets. RTO12 would be responsible for initial set-up fees and monthly servicing/licensing.
Proposal Click Here
System Examples/ Case Studies: http://usa.visitmaine.com/

JackRabbit:
JackRabbit is a Search Engine, not a booking engine. No transactions occur on the system. The JackRabbit Engine allows an online visitor to search/query availability, lodging types, price, location, etc. But, at the point where the visitor is ready to book, JackRabbit links them directly to the reservation system of the selected hotel to complete a direct booking. There is no additional inventory management required by RTO12 hotel partners. The technology pulls rates and availability from the hotel partner's reservation systems (or is fed this info by the hotels through an XML feed). The hotel owns the customer relationship. There are no fees or commissions charged to the hotel (100% of the revenue remains in the local market). RTO12 would be responsible for initial set-up fees and annual licensing.
Proposal Click Here
System Examples/ Case Studies: http://www.banfflakelouise.com/
http://www.seetorontonow.com/

ExpoSoft:
ExpoSoft is an inventory and content management system which can be customized to an online hotel and packaging booking engine. Financial transactions are completed using PayPal (TT reimburses partners). There are no fees charged to the hotel and activity participants. RTO12 would be responsible for system development costs, initial set-up fees and annual servicing/licensing.
Proposal Click Here
System Examples/ Case Studies: World Youth Day 2005, FIFA World Cup 2010

Meridian:
Meridian is a Search Engine and a Booking Engine. The Meridian system allows online visitors to search/query availability, lodging types, price, location etc.. When the consumer is ready to book the system either transacts or transfers the consumer over to the participant website for final sale. Meridian provides a measurable approach where an analytical package will enable the RTO to track sales and web site analytics. There is additional inventory management required using the Meridian platform and stated, "Successful deployment involves the commitment of sufficient human resources toward the initiative". There are fees for initial setup costs and monthly fees for both the RTO and the operator.
Proposal Click Here
System Examples / Case Studies: http://www.tourismvancouver.com/ RTO4
http://www.betterweekending.ca/

Results of the RFP Process

Based on our evaluations of the four proposals received, the Transacting Chair and staff consulted with the Marketing Chair, Muskoka Tourism and four hotel companies in the RTO12 region. The consensus from those consultations was that both the Jack Rabbit and Meridian systems are the front runners, each having pros and cons for recommendation:

	Jack Rabbit	Meridian
Pros	Preferred method to book rooms, hotel packages, attraction and activity tickets for RTO12 members One fee to the RTO Provided a free service for operators that do not have a reservation platform	Preferred method to analyze analytics and sales. Offered both a booking service and a referral service – Hotel Direct. Took time and learned about our business RTO12 has had a hybrid of this platform before
Cons	Limited analytics – referral basis	Monthly cost to the operator and RTO Labour Investment in Human Resources

The notable difference between the two systems is the investment of human resources against the need for sufficient analytics.

While the situation is complex, the RTO has had success in driving qualified traffic to stakeholders through our digital marketing programs. By providing an option to book we can offer a deeper level of engagement, the sale, essentially the RTO can move a potential visitor to an actual committed visitor.

Going forward, both Meridian and Jack Rabbit will be presented to the Transacting Committee for a deeper level of engagement and feedback.

Meantime, if you have any questions regarding these proposals, please feel free to contact me.

James