

Virtuoso Travel Week Looks to the Next 25 Years

August 12, 2013 By: Meagan Drillinger

Virtuoso is celebrating 25 years this year, and they have reason to. As the luxury travel consortium kicked off its annual Virtuoso Travel Week in Las Vegas yesterday, August 11, Chairman and CEO Matthew Upchurch toasted the more than 4,000 attendees in the audience and looked toward the next 25 years and what is to come in the future.



To the Future

To the future, indeed. With the idea of what comes next in mind, Upchurch invited to the stage Ken Dychtwald, president and CEO of Age Wave, who reminded advisors in the audience of a very important truth. Travelers are not just getting younger; they are getting older. And while the next generation of travelers is exciting, it is the ones who are still traveling that want to see the game changed and shook up, as well. He explained that the role of the Virtuoso advisor is to make dreams come true by delivering on the promise of Return on Life (ROL), and that travel planning should be based on helping clients achieve a particular feeling, rather than just getting to a certain place.

"We are here today at the birth of a new era of your industry," Dychtwald says. "People say the breakthrough is a tech frontier, but I'd go head-to-head that who we become in our adult, middlescent and retirement years is wide open."

He begs the question, "When are we old?," pointing out that the average age of the Rolling Stones is now 70. Seventy isn't "70" anymore. People in their 60s and 70s have most of the money in the world, and as a luxury travel advisor, here is your opportunity to sell to a generation of travelers who still wants to feel and prove that they are as alive as ever, and they have the time to do so. In a survey that Age Wave conducted where they polled approximately 6,000 people in this demographic, 47 percent responded that they wanted to travel with their discretionary time.

"Your role is to make dreams come true. That's about the coolest job you can think of," he says. "Your job is to see into peoples' hearts, relationships and lives. Try to imagine what it is that is their dream and then curate it, sculpt it and bring it to life."

Trust and Collaboration

Next to take the stage was Virtuoso favorite Simon Sinek, an author and "optimist," as he calls himself. Sinek reinforced the importance of relationships between advisor and client, reminding the audience that advisors truly take their clients lives and happiness into their hands. That's a powerful role to have.

"It's not about planning the next vacation for someone. It's about looking after lives of human beings. Make them feel that you are protecting them and keeping them safe and looking after them," he says. "You have the power to change the world. It's not about the trips you plan, but about people you care for."

In that same vein, Lee Brower, founder of Empowered Wealth, who has more than 12 years experience as an Entrepreneurial Coach for Strategic Coach Inc., took the stage to explain how business is about vision, motion, connection and celebration; and it is becoming a connection-based economy.

To the Next 25

With audience revved up and ready for a week of hundreds of four-minute meetings between advisors and suppliers, Upchurch took the stage once more to discuss the future of Virtuoso.

Virtuoso is focused on building a website that is going to change the way people connect with the brand online.

"Even before social media, our focus was on connecting people," says Upchurch. "That's why I'm so excited about the roadmap we're executing, with the biggest addition being its extension to consumers and our pooling of data in near real time. The new virtuoso.com starts with a simple yet very powerful concept; we only need one website for all Virtuoso constituents. What makes this different is that it includes capabilities for browsing consumers as well as existing clients who have access to the site through their Virtuoso advisor. Now our day-to-day network tool can be optimized to its primary focus: connecting new mutually desirable clients with our agency members and their travel advisors."

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