Dream destinations beckon—but first, online booking must be fast, smooth, and seamless

Consumers love booking trips online: the convenience, the control, and the hunt for travel bargains. But the popularity of online booking—and its underlying complexity—has caused industry website traffic to double every 18 months. So Travelport selected HPE to help the company re-imagine its travel commerce platform. The result: highly scalable IT that equips Travelport for today’s performance demands, prepares it for tomorrow’s, and delivers an innovative funding model that frees cash flow for growth and innovation.
Every journey begins with a single search

Customer demand for convenience is driving competitive innovation in the global travel and tourism industry.

The global travel and tourism industry is undergoing profound transformation.

The traditional brick-and-mortar travel agency still exists, but its role has shifted as travelers turn to online travel agencies (OTAs) to book hotels, cars, airline, and other travel services.

Today’s tech-savvy travelers are more demanding. Whether traveling for leisure or business, they want the ability to self-serve and manage their own bookings in real time. The rise of low-cost mobile technologies enables consumers to be online anytime, anywhere—and the window to capture their attention is narrow.

Meanwhile, the number of airlines, flights, and airfare options continues to skyrocket globally, increasing market complexity. Metasearch engines now aggregate travel offers across multiple sources. Travelers looking for flights or hotels are often presented with hundreds or thousands of options that shift dramatically by the hour—or even the minute.

New technologies promise to simplify the consumer experience. Automation, artificial intelligence (AI), and machine learning, combined with mobility, cloud, and Application Programming Interface (API)-connected platforms allow content to be consumed more efficiently across devices, providing travelers with smarter, more personalized and timely information. Beyond basic functionality such as mobile check-ins, bookings, and itinerary updates, the industry is developing such innovations as virtual assistants, and chat bots to simulate human conversation.

All of this increases the demands on the travel industry’s technology systems. The players that thrive are those that pioneer innovative technologies wisely and cost-efficiently to improve the customer experience.
Global platform drives travel commerce

The Travelport Travel Commerce Platform enables travel providers, travel agencies, corporations and developers to search, share, buy and sell travel.

Travelport Worldwide Ltd. is a leading travel commerce provider of distribution, technology, payment, and mobile solutions for the global travel and tourism industry. It’s the company behind the scenes of many online travel agencies (OTAs), such as Priceline and Make My Trip, as well as the “metas” (Meta Search Engines) like Kayak that leverage OTA’s to generate aggregated travel offers. Travelport processed $79 billion of travel spending in 2016.

The company’s model leverages its proprietary business-to-business Travel Commerce Platform to connect travel providers, including airlines, hotel chains, and rental-car agencies, with more than 68,000 online and offline travel agencies. Travelport’s portfolio includes more than 450 airlines, 650,000 hotel properties, 37,000 car rental locations, and 60 cruise and tour operators. Based in the United Kingdom and publicly traded, Travelport employs 3,700 people and reaches more than 180 countries.

30+ currencies supported

$79B travel spending processed in 2016

$2.4B 2016 revenues

“We’re a market maker, bringing efficiency and increased profitability to all participants in the travel industry.”

Jim Morris, Group Vice President, Technology CFO, Travelport
Embrace growth, evolve services, invest in innovation

OTAs and other travel service providers expect Travelport to help them deliver value to their customers: lightning-fast queries and better ways to book and manage their travel.

Travelport’s customers know what they need: to attract online visitors, engage them, convert their queries into bookings, and earn their loyalty and repeat business.

It’s up to Travelport to give its customers those capabilities. That means enabling its customers to offer new traveler-facing resources such as mobile apps. It means enabling new data analytics tools Travelport customers can use to understand and improve the traveler experience.

One measure of success in the travel industry is “look to book” ratio of searches resulting in sales. Travelport seeks to optimize that metric for its customers. It seeks to equip travel companies to drive results via intelligently targeted offerings rather than overwhelming consumers with a surfeit of fragmented search results. Travelport is also developing ways to improve its customers’ operational efficiencies, including its pioneering business-to-business payment solution and its cloud-based agency automation tools.

Travelport must accomplish all this while keeping its infrastructure costs flat. Rather than tie up significant capital, the company wants cash available to invest in innovation.

“We are measured by the second for uptime, for availability, for search speed, for being able to create a transaction that results in a sale. If we don’t have the most current technology driving performance and continuous innovation, we’re at a competitive disadvantage.”

Jim Morris, Group Vice President, Technology CFO, Travelport
Faster, better, cheaper: no trade-offs, no compromise

Travelport must accommodate exponential growth in its transaction volumes, deliver lightning-fast service—and prepare for a future where demands will take new twists.

With the proliferation of OTAs, metasearch engines, and travel management companies—plus rising number of air carriers and flights—Travelport expects to see the number of shopping transactions on its platform continue to double every 18 months. The company’s systems must accommodate this rapid growth without compromising service quality.

They must be highly reliable to ensure that Travelport’s OTA customer sites are available around the clock.

Travelport also strives to continually reduce latency and improve transaction speed—as often, fast speeds and low latency are critical to an OTAs ability to get its deals to the top of an offer list. Travelport’s current goal is to reduce average response times to less than one second.

Travelport wants to create new applications and allow developers to deploy their apps quickly, without having to submit IT tickets.

And finally, Travelport must be prepared for the future—a future where AI and machine learning enable OTAs to invent compelling new services for travelers and launch those services at unprecedented speed.

“We have multiple IT drivers: accommodate exponential growth, reduce transaction speeds, and reduce processing costs. To accomplish this, we want to make better use of data analytics and pursue a hybrid-cloud strategy enabled by converged infrastructure.”

Charles Shiflett, Vice President of Infrastructure Management, Travelport
Holistic IT transformation encompasses technology, services, and financing

Next-generation solutions deliver capacity and agility while matching asset costs to usage lifecycle.

Travelport first deployed density-optimized HPE Apollo and ProLiant servers in its existing Atlanta data centers, improving scalability through a Platform-as-a-Service model.

In these data centers, Travelport is using its HPE backbone to push selected workloads closer to the consumer via a hybrid cloud for faster response times. A composable infrastructure frees up storage and enables Travelport to harness big data using Apache Hadoop. This streamlines transaction processing and enables Travelport to develop new ways to monetize customer data.

Travelport also built out a new, state-of-the-art data center to enhance its disaster recovery and business continuity capabilities. Travelport chose the HPE Synergy platform for the new data center when testing validated that the performance of the HPE solution is nearly 30% faster than comparable technology.

A major reason Travelport chose HPE as its partner relates to new technology HPE is bringing to market. For example, Travelport implemented an HPE Superdome Flex platform to advance its technology into high performance computing, with the eventual goal of leveraging in-memory compute architecture to enable more sophisticated analytics without compromising transaction speeds. For technology implementation and infrastructure maintenance, Travelport leverages HPE Pointnext.

An IT investment strategy with HPE Financial Services enables Travelport to preserve cash and align their IT infrastructure payments with IT usage. The agreement is structured to reflect how Travelport plans to leverage various pieces of its technology infrastructure over time, optimizing the value of its refresh cycles both technically and fiscally.

“We crossed a scale boundary where a normal data center refresh would not have been enough. We had to rethink what we were doing. HPE collaborated with us tactically and strategically to help us gain capacity, drive down costs, and improve performance in a converged way.”

Charles Shiflett, Vice President of Infrastructure Management, Travelport
New ways to make travel fun

Empowered financially and technically to transform its commerce platform, Travelport is unlocking innovation and helping its travel-industry customers create a better experience for adventurers around the world.

Travelport has transformed its infrastructure to sustainably support exponential growth while continuously improving performance.

Transactions running on its new data center’s HPE Synergy servers run 28-32% faster than on its older generation servers, which include aging Cisco Unified Computing System (UCS) blades. The HPE Synergy platform also expands workload capacity, preparing Travelport for future growth in transaction volumes. Because the new data center also serves as a DR site, it significantly reduces Travelport’s risk of unplanned service disruptions.

This, in turn, enables Travelport to empower its travel-industry customers to increase their business success—from improved booking-to-looking ratios to targeted cross-selling and back-office efficiencies.

Travelport’s HPE Superdome Flex platform equips the company to drive new travel industry advancements in AI and machine learning. By transforming its IT investment strategy, Travelport is able to accelerate state-of-the-art IT improvements while streamlining its costs. This helped reduce the company’s debt load and interest rates, and match IT costs with asset usage—all of which frees cash flow for innovation.

“Creating a seamless, personalized, streamlined traveler experience—those are the types of advances we can pursue with our platform now that we’ve removed the constraints on innovation.”

Jim Morris, Group Vice President, Technology CFO, Travelport