

Best Travel Case Study

Taking Best Travel's Online Travel Booking Capabilities to the Next Level

Chicago-based Best Travel (www.besttravel.com) was founded in 1969 with a focus on providing its clients with the highest level of personalized attention. As one of the nation's leading travel management companies, Best Travel has experienced significant growth for the past 35 years while providing its unique "high touch" personalized services. Offering cutting edge online and offline reservation assistance, Best Travel handles complete corporate, leisure and meeting group travel needs for discriminating national and global corporate clients.

Best Travel's core business is focused on the corporate travel market. Its 500+ business travel accounts depend on the company's comprehensive, 24-hour business travel services that include worldwide emergency assistance, "meet and greet" assistance, international currency, visa/passport services, consolidated data and complete account management. Best Travel's size and scope of services, combined with its years of corporate travel management experience, ensure clients receive the very best in business travel programs, agents, discounts and special services for all their business travel needs.

"Best Travel stands apart from the mega agencies and super-regionals because of our high level of focus on service," says Judi McCarthy, Best Travel's Vice President of Sales and Client Services. "We find that even customers that rely heavily on online travel booking tools are looking for those tools to be backed by superior, personalized customer service."

Tracking the Trends

Best Travel was an early adopter of online travel booking technology, but in 2005 sensed another shift in what their customers were looking for. As a result, the company surveyed customer satisfaction with its current tool and found the majority of customers wanted a solution that would take their online travel booking capabilities to the next level.

"When we first founded Best Travel in the late '60s, we didn't even have computers. Now, technology is everything," observed McCarthy. "We had seen Rearden Commerce's CEO, Patrick Grady, speak at an ACTE event and were so impressed with his vision for the industry. Right then and there, we decided the Rearden Commerce platform was the solution we wanted. We felt Rearden Commerce really represented the wave of the future and we wanted to be out there offering the product to our customers immediately."

Best Travel signed on as a member of the Rearden Commerce Alliance Program, which enables select regional travel management companies (TMCs) to deliver the Rearden Commerce solution to their clients. In Best Travel's case, that offering manifests itself as part of its BestRes offering, a comprehensive web-based platform for services of all kinds, powered by Rearden Commerce.

Best Travel selected Rearden Commerce based on the ease of use and range of functionality offered by its solution, and the ability to offer their clients a tool that provides spend management across a wide range of services in addition to travel. This enhanced value proposition allows Best Travel to create the ultimate win-win environment where ease of use delights the end users, and comprehensive spend management excites those at the corporation who pay the bills.

In choosing its Alliance Program members, Rearden Commerce identifies and certifies TMCs that have well-established client relationships, a reputation for outstanding customer service, diversified offerings, successful client deployments and a proven track record for delivering value to the business traveler.

Rearden Commerce Delivers the Total Travel Experience for Best Travel

The Rearden Commerce Total Travel Experience goes well beyond online booking of air, hotel and car to address the changing demands of today's corporate travelers. With the only integrated commerce platform and marketplace for services of all kinds, Rearden Commerce orchestrates all aspects of a trip including travel, dining, entertainment, car service and airport parking through an online Personal Assistant that understands the traveler's preferences, manages the services booking and then integrates the booked services seamlessly with the traveler's calendar.

Rearden Commerce also extends its reach to related employee services like Web and audio conferencing and desktop package shipping; and tracks spend across all services while applying corporate policy and managing preferred vendor relationships.

The Rearden Commerce solution helps Best Travel clients comprehensively manage spending on the services their employees use every day and provides Best Travel with an enhanced value proposition and a competitive advantage.

Best Travel Customers Appreciate the Rearden Commerce Differentiators

Best Travel cites the ease of making reservations with the Rearden Personal Assistant as a key selling point with its customers. Customers also appreciate the Rearden Personal Assistant's intuitive user interface and unique features such as the ability to sort hotels by amenities and star ratings, which bring a consumer-like experience to corporate travel booking.

The ability to view comparison pricing on one screen without having to visit multiple vendors' Web sites is also a differentiator. McCarthy says that Best Travel's customers get excited when they learn they can compare pricing, service options and providers for services such as shipping and conferencing all on one screen – a capability they've never had before.

“From the first time I saw what Rearden Commerce was offering, I knew this was something my clients would love,” said McCarthy. “Being a reseller of this solution provides me with an important tool to help me grow my business. By providing my clients with the next generation of online booking technology, they are now able to manage other critical areas of employee business services spend, not just travel. It's a win-win for both of us.”

Best Travel Grows Its Business with the Help of Rearden Commerce

Best Travel recognizes the value of the Rearden Commerce solution in providing its customers with an addictive, industry-leading Web 2.0 service that drives user adoption.

The unprecedented breadth of the Rearden Commerce solution helps corporate customers not only reduce expenses for air, hotel and car rental, but also helps them manage their spending for a broader range of employee services including dining, airport parking, car service, corporate entertainment, Web and audio conferencing, and desktop shipping – significant T&E expenses that have historically gone unmanaged. In addition, Best Travel believes strongly in the services “long tail,” which is the ability to potentially boost its bottom line by continually offering customers a breadth of new travel and business services.

More Wins, Faster Deployments and a Revenue Long Tail

“We’re finding that once our customers see a demo of the Rearden Commerce platform, they’re very impressed,” remarks McCarthy. “Rearden Commerce really embodies Web 2.0 technology – with its platform, it’s so much easier to change, use, modify and add new services on an ongoing basis.”

Best Travel’s previous Web-based tool did not have the ability to give Best Travel control of customizing the creation of the internal portal for their clients’ travel bookings. Best Travel would have to rely on support from the tool’s development team to finish the customization of their clients’ sites. Now with Rearden Commerce, Best Travel can build sites for its customers, with little to no assistance required, helping to greatly speed the implementation cycle. Best Travel is currently able to roll out a new customer every few weeks, versus every several months with the previous solution. As a result of the success Best Travel has achieved as a Rearden Commerce Alliance Partner, it recently upgraded to the Alliance Program’s premium level, which provides Best Travel with a master license to serve unlimited customers and to generate unlimited transactions across the Rearden Commerce platform. In addition to this unlimited access to the Rearden Commerce suite of services, Best Travel now also shares in the revenue generated by sales in non-sourced new services areas.

For instance, with Rearden Commerce, Best Travel can help clients make arrangements for chauffeured car service, dinner reservations, or tickets while entertaining clients – going far beyond the traditional air/hotel/rental car services booking. Best Travel can not only help clients arrange for those services, but can share in the revenue streams they deliver, which goes right to the agency’s bottom line.

“We’ve been very active in bringing existing accounts onto the Rearden Commerce platform and using it as a differentiator to help us win new business,” says McCarthy. “Being a Rearden Commerce reseller really helps us shorten our sales cycle and grow our business. In fact, we can directly attribute signing more than 10 new customers recently as a result of our relationship with Rearden Commerce.”

“Providing the Rearden Personal Assistant to our customers has become one of our greatest strategies for success,” McCarthy concludes. “With Rearden Commerce, we can now offer our customers the convenience of the consumer Web married with the power of one of the most cutting-edge corporate booking tools on the market. The end result is a delightful and addictive user experience that makes driving user adoption easier than ever before. We, along with our customers, couldn’t be more pleased with the Rearden Commerce experience.”

Rearden Commerce, Inc.

Rearden Commerce makes life simpler by delivering a web-based personal assistant that intuitively manages the everyday details of business and personal life. Just like a seasoned executive assistant, the Rearden Personal Assistant™ handles an impressive array of tasks and services, and delights users by considering their unique needs and personal preferences. The Rearden Personal Assistant is built on the Rearden Commerce™ Platform, which supports an ecosystem of more than 160,000 trusted merchants and third-party applications providers. Today, more than one and a half million contracted users at organizations ranging from the Fortune 500 to small/medium enterprises, including ConAgra Foods, Glaxo Smith Kline and JDSU, rely on the recommendations and assistance of the Rearden Personal Assistant to save time and be more efficient, while saving their companies money. Rearden Commerce is headquartered in Foster City, CA. For more information, visit reardencommerce.com