

Developments

THE VOICE OF THE VACATION OWNERSHIP INDUSTRY

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Timeshare's New Breed of Pioneers

Transforming the industry through innovative sales & marketing solutions

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Apple, Google, and Facebook have something in common with three relatively new timeshare companies, all of which were founded by young tech-savvy entrepreneurs with a vision for creating solutions to existing situations. Apple founder Steve Jobs left college after only one semester. Larry Page and Sergey Brin (both 23) left Stanford after coming up with the idea for Google, and Mark Zuckerberg was 19 when he founded Facebook.

The Internet has transformed how we live, and a trio of young entrepreneurs are using that technology to provide innovative sales and marketing solutions within the timeshare industry.

Evolving Marketplaces

Jason Tremblay grew up spending vacations at timeshare resorts. Years later, when his mother had an unsavory experience with a fraudulent resale company, he was motivated to investigate the industry. He learned that, although there was a robust demand for an online product to serve this market, no successful technology platform

For about a year, he closely studied search engine optimization (SEO) and Google's algorithms. He knew his idea would be successful if he could attract buyers, renters, and sellers, which no company was able to do at that time.

"The truth is I was extraordinarily naïve and more than willing to take a risk, which probably worked to my advantage," says Tremblay. "While I was initially a technoneophyte, the knowledge I later acquired played a huge role in the development and expansion of our company. Our corporate growth was fueled by our proprietary SEO technology, which is frankly changing by the hour."

SellMyTimeshareNOW.com was self-funded for the first six years. Venture capital assistance in 2008 allowed his company to grow internally and then expand marketing and product development. The company is now a global leader in timeshare resales and rentals, with more than two million page-views a month.

"The Internet is bringing visibility and access to the resale market that never existed before," he adds. "This will continue to grow. We have only just begun to fulfill our initial business objectives. Developers who find ways to participate in that growth will thrive by aligning themselves with the right resale partner. I disagree with those who believe that timeshare is not a sought good. Just ask any of the several thousand people who come to our Web site every month searching to purchase or rent a timeshare."

Predictive Analytics

British-born Daniel Green began selling timeshares in Greece when he was 20. After a rocky start, he became proficient in all facets of sales and marketing and ultimately sold for about nine years in Cypress, Spain, the Canary Islands, and Asia.

The recession brought a wakeup call, making us realize we had to be smarter as an industry." – Daniel Green

existed to capture buyer and seller requests. At the time, he was in the direct marketing business conducting seminars.

After extensive research, Tremblay believed that if someone approached it with the right platform, there was a huge opportunity for creating an online timeshare sales and rental marketplace. In 2003, he founded SellMyTimeshareNOW.com at age 31.

When he came to the United States six years ago, he found a dramatically different sales culture and was amazed by the high sales and marketing costs. He briefly worked for a training organization and spent two years in sales with the Berkeley Group. After personal research, he believed that timeshare marketing could be dramatically improved through the use of technology-based predictive analytics.

Although he had limited technology experience at the time, he did know the timeshare business. He knew there was a better way to improve sales and marketing and was not fearful of taking a risk. In the fall of 2007 at the age of 32, he co-founded Trooval, Inc. (www.troovalinc.com) with Stephanie Loosvelt (now the firm's general counsel), raising capital from angel investors and later from venture capitalists.

Living in Las Vegas, Green knew that the casino industry had long used predictive analytics and data to make better offers for their customers.

"Luckily," he recalls, "one of our early advisors had been with Harrah's Entertainment. After 12 months as our primary advisor, Jonathan Lowenhar became our CEO, and we hired programmers and designers to keep all patent-pending technology in house. From the beginning, we knew it would work. There was a problem that needed resolution, and we had the ability to solve it."

Trooval is a business intelligence company dedicated exclusively to the timeshare industry. It uses predictive analytics technology to improve sales and marketing practices by determining which tours have a higher propensity to purchase before marketing dollars have been spent. Green, who serves as vice president of business development, says he does not believe the company could have been formed five years ago.

"Not only is the technology better but there also was an attitude limitation then. The recession brought a wakeup call, making us realize we had to be smarter as an industry. This is where we stepped in to help."

Interactive Platforms

Sunil Aluvila, founder of Vacation Storebuilder, was just 24 when his first company, a direct marketing firm, was hired to launch the first large scale mixed-use vacation ownership development in his native India.

Three young timeshare execs have implemented technology to change the face of the timeshare industry.



JASON TREMBLAY
SellMyTimeshareNow LLC



DANIEL GREEN
Trooval, Inc.



SUNIL ALUVILA
Vacation Storebuilder

After building his company to over 100 employees and selling it in 1994, Aluvila obtained an MBA in international business & marketing. His thesis, "Major Sales and Marketing Issues Faced by the Timeshare Industry in the United States," highlighted the product's lack of flexibility and sales methods. He believed that a points-based product would provide greater flexibility of use, and it would eventually have to be sold online to offer a strong value proposition to the consumer while reducing the costs of sales and marketing.

Aluvila joined Shell Vacations in 1997, where he led product development of new points-based vacation club and sales and marketing technology solutions.

Seven years later, at the age of 37, his entrepreneurial spirit motivated him to found Vibes Interactive LLC, to harness the power of the Internet and provide the industry with an interactive sales and on-line marketing platform. Vacation Storebuilder (www.vacationstorebuilder.com) was launched in 2010 as the first SaaS (Software-as-a-Service) platform for vacation ownership and vacation

rental companies to create and manage e-commerce Web sites for vacation rentals, prospect generation, and marketing of resale inventory and short term products—on a pay-per-performance model.

"If I had been older when I started this journey," he reminisces, "it would have been difficult to invest so many years building a platform and remain confident that it would play a pivotal role in bringing vacation products online to consumers. My biggest hurdle was getting investors to recognize the potential of the vacation ownership and vacation rental industries."

Angel investors enabled Aluvila to forge ahead with his vision. With the recent launch of Vacation Storebuilder, he has developed strategic alliances with major players to provide the e-commerce platform for a variety of vacation products.

He concludes, "It is clear that technology—based on a sound business strategy—has become the cornerstone of everything our generation has accomplished and is now creating a fundamental shift in how we market and sell vacation products." ■

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