

GetThere Turns 10 With A New Look And A 'Touchless' Focus

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The travel industry almost always divides travelers into two groups, corporate and leisure, and develops products and services for one or the other. On occasion, the industry remembers that a corporate traveler can be a leisure traveler on a different day. The consumer who navigates through an online agency at night, poring over hotel photographs, reading about amenities and comparing rental car types for a vacation, might be the same person who logs onto a corporate booking tool the next morning to plan a business trip.

GetThere, one of the pioneers in the field of corporate booking tools, is marking its 10th birthday by marrying the appeal of online booking tools designed for leisure travelers with the travel management and compliance needs of corporations. For half its life, it has been a unit of **Sabre Holdings Corp.**, and it is learning a lot about presentation from its sister company, **Travelocity**.



So far, **GetThere** has converted its car rental and hotel shopping paths to the new format.

The result is a significantly friendlier experience: **GetThere** now incorporates **Travelocity's** hotel photos and highlights the amenities most sought after by business travelers. (A click will deliver a more comprehensive list of a property's features.)

Business travelers who need rental cars will find photos of representative car types so that there's no confusion between, say, an intermediate and a compact car.

But the point is not just to make the traveler feel warm and fuzzy; better, more comprehensive information, both visual and textual, makes the traveler feel empowered, said Beverly Heinritz, **GetThere's** general manager. And an empowered traveler is more likely to use the tool.

It's too soon to say whether adoption has increased due to the changes, but Heinritz said anecdotal reports indicate that travel managers really like what they are seeing.

Some of them, she said, are pleased enough that they are relaunching their hotel programs.

Less visible but just as important is a boost in speed; pages load much faster.

The redesign of the air shopping path is slated for the fourth quarter. And in December, travelers will be offered multimodal fare comparisons where appropriate; for example, travelers from New York to Washington will see air fares and Amtrak prices on the same display.

Adoption has been the major focus of **GetThere** for several years, Heinritz said, but as **GetThere** moves into its second decade, the focus is shifting to touchless transactions.

To that end, **GetThere** began automating ticket exchanges, voids and refunds a category that comprises 7% to 30% of transactions, depending on the company late last year.

Its next project is an unused ticket bank that will ensure that available ticket value doesnt go to waste.

Meetings are another area that represents a big savings opportunity for corporations, Heinritz said. About 70% of meetings are planned outside the travel program.

GetThere has formed partnerships with OnVantage and StarCite to tap into the market.

Next month, **GetTheres** Direct- Meetings will be fully integrated with DirectCorporate.

Registration sites will be available in nine color schemes to coordinate with a companys look.

Later this year and in early 2006, the meetings tool will have expanded reporting capability and continued user interface enhancements.