

## **HEDNA Conference Speaks to Personalization and Content as Drivers of Electronic Distribution**

December 22, 2006, Falls Church, Va. – At its December 2006 Conference in Sunny Isles, Florida, the Hotel Electronic Distribution Network Association (HEDNA) celebrated its 15th Anniversary. Attendees learned the latest trends affecting the marketplace and offered predictions on the future of electronic distribution.

Speaking at the Conference, Forrester Research Vice President Henry Harteveldt emphasized new technologies, particularly mobile devices, and launched the continued theme of personalization and content as drivers of electronic distribution. As people increasingly interact with technology, creating a humanizing digital experience for the user will become increasingly important. Harteveldt shared his company's analysis of its recent research into consumer and business travel technology preferences. In 2005, 8 percent of consumers used a meta-search engine to research a trip. In 2006, 13 percent used meta-search engines. He urged attendees to go back and encourage their companies to master the tools and technology that takes customer relationship management to a much higher level.

Lalia Rach, Associate Dean and Director, Tisch Center for Hospitality, Tourism, and Sports Management, NYU, presented some conclusions from “Hospitality 2010”, a study released in June and co-authored by NYU and Deloitte’s Tourism, Hospitality & Leisure Practice. The report shows how individual hospitality enterprises should address several key intertwining trends. For example, brand is expected to surpass location as deciding factor in hotel choices; China, India and the Gulf States is expected to experience substantial growth; Aging consumers will change the game; and, playing catch-up with technology. Regarding emerging markets, she spoke to the nuances of various generational groups to help hotels refine how they distribute product to meet the distinct needs of each demographic. Innovation in these areas would be key to building consumer loyalty. She urged attendees to seize these opportunities and achieve financial success.

Quality time is given at every HEDNA Conference to allow its Committees to work on important deliverables that shape the direction of electronic distribution. Progress continues to be made in the areas of tour and group automation, chain switcher over procedures and credit card verification. The Credit Card Verification & Validation Subcommittee was complimented by information presented by Seana Pitt, Vice President, Global Merchant Policies and Data Quality, American Express and Chair of the Payment Card Industry (PCI) Security Standards Council ([www.pcisecuritystandards.org](http://www.pcisecuritystandards.org)).

“How appropriate it was to highlight this Council at our 15 year anniversary” said Tiffany Topcik, HEDNA President. “This is a new opportunity for our member companies to help shape the credit card Data Security Standard (DSS) and security developments.”

The Content Management Subcommittee continues to spearhead an initiative to create a standard Unique Global Identifier (UGI) for all entities in the hospitality industry to help identify travel agents, hotels, intermediaries, etc., in all parts of the distribution process. The goal is to increase trade, revenue and harmonization of first the reservation processing transaction and then to

continually add more transactions and eventually become the identification standard for the industry. For more information, go to <http://www.hedna.org/communicate/documents/UGIBriefFINAL08-11-2006.pdf>.

HEDNA continues to work closely with the NBTA Hotel Committee and has collectively identified key distribution issues for the corporate channel. Executives on the “Distribution Needs in the Corporate Channel” panel discussed corporate hotel rate challenges and offered solutions. Of particular note was rate loading and full disclosure of all pricing components on the GDS. Group self booking tools were examined as a growing part of the distribution process, and again, the vitality of content and education.

Likewise, the fallacy that travel agents are going away was disregarded as market leaders shared their technology developments and the significant advancements to sell hotel product. This had led to continued increases in the number of hotels driven through electronic channels and stronger partnerships created with front end interfaces and direct connect solutions.

Ted Souder, Midwest travel vertical manager for Google, shared how his company is helping consumers search for travel and lodging on the Internet. Attendees saw a new digital path illustrating how “data beats opinion”, “what to sell, when and to whom”, and the “digital purchase funnel”. Examples were given regarding how a distributor interacts at different touch points of the customer and the connection between online and offline behavior. Key ideas were offered on how to use technology to make smarter decisions, recognizing that customers are in control and they want to be engaged.

Closing Keynote Speaker Bill Frizzell, Global Hospitality Industry Strategist, Microsoft Corporation, reminded us to think of IT as our most strategic business partner. This theme resonated through many speakers at the conference, as we were again reminded how little capital is spent in the hospitality arena. Mr. Frizzell said that an investment in IT is critical to move forward and it must deliver more business value and drive revenue. Success is driven by those who define and implement smarter hospitality.

As HEDNA celebrated 15 years of educating, innovating and influencing the distribution industry, attendees were given ample time to meet and network with their distribution colleagues. Conference sponsors contributed to these opportunities through their generous support: ABC Corporate Services; Access America Travel Insurance; AMADEUS IT Group SA; CCRA; Hotel Booking Solutions Inc.; Hotel Concepts USA, LLC; Hotel Reservation Service; Hyatt Hotels & Resorts; IDEaS, Inc.; Lanyon; Opodo; Pegasus Solutions Inc.; Priceline.com; PROS Pricing Solutions; Sabre Holdings; SideStep; Karyon; Starwood Hotels & Resorts; Travelport; TravelCLICK, Inc.; VFM Interactive Inc.; VISA International; VRX Studios, Inc.; and, WORLDSPAN.

*The next HEDNA Conference will be 20 – 22 May 2007 in Dublin, Ireland. To receive a complimentary press invitation, please contact Catherine McDonald at [cmcdonald@disa.org](mailto:cmcdonald@disa.org) or phone +1 703 970-2064.*

Engaging audiences, benchmarking metrics and what it takes to create successful online experiences were recurring themes at HSMAI's 7th Travel Internet Marketing Strategy Conference, an event held after the HEDNA Conference. Over 130 representatives from a cross-section of the travel industry attended the intensive full-day session. For more information, visit [www.hsmmai.org](http://www.hsmmai.org).

### **About HEDNA**

The Hotel Electronic Distribution Network Association (HEDNA) is a not-for-profit trade association whose worldwide membership includes executives and managers from over 200 of the most influential companies in the hotel distribution industry. Founded in 1991, all of HEDNA's activities are intended to stimulate the booking of hotel rooms through the use of GDS, the Internet and other electronic means. HEDNA brings all segments of the hotel industry together to evolve systems and services into electronic distribution that is easy and efficient. Additional information on HEDNA is available by calling +1 703 970-2052 or by visiting [www.hedna.org](http://www.hedna.org).