

Duff on Hospitality Law

## Online Travel Update: Technology Powers Loyalty Program Growth, and Group Travel Continues Its Move Online

By Greg Duff on 4.22.22 | Posted in Online Travel Update, Travel

Last week was all about loyalty as we saw a number of stories on the new roles that technology and online platforms are playing for hoteliers seeking to update and expand (or even launch) their loyalty programs. We include three of those stories in this week's Update. Enjoy.

### Technology Powers Loyalty Program Growth

*(“IHG introduces new loyalty program,” April 13, 2022 via Hotel Business)*

*(“Tech is powering the new look of hotel loyalty programs,” April 16, 2022 via Phocus Wire)*

*(“Fintech to Help Smaller Hotel Brands Like Selina Launch Rewards Cards,” April 13, 2022 via Skift) (subscription may be required)*

This week, we feature three separate stories detailing the important role that technology (and online platforms) is playing in updating existing and launching new loyalty programs.

- In recent weeks, both IHG and Accor have announced major updates (in the case of IHG, a complete overhaul) to their loyalty programs. In the case of IHG and its new [IHG One Rewards](#) program, the program is centered on IHG's mobile application and now allows members to customize the rewards they receive through another online platform, Milestone Rewards. The newly constituted program, including Milestone Rewards, is expected to be available in June. Accor also recently announced changes to its loyalty program Accor Live Limitless (ALL) through a new partnership with online entertainment platform [Fever](#), which will allow members to use their loyalty program benefits to book a variety of activities and experiences.
- Lastly, [Skift](#) explains how fintech startups are allowing smaller hotel and travel companies ([Selina](#)) to launch new co-branded payment cards (to boost their fledging loyalty programs) in under a month. In Selina's case, its planned card will feature cash rewards for signing up, loyalty program points and cash rebates for hotel stays.

### Group Travel Continues Its Move Online

*(“Cvent Embraces Marketplace Concept,” April 14, 2022 via Business Travel News)*

Anyone else seeing the dramatic shift of group bookings to online platforms? For years, both

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groups and the hotels, conference centers and convention centers that host them viewed online platforms as less than adequate to manage the myriad of options associated with most group bookings. As our Updates over the past weeks and months have detailed (supported by the volume of requests that we are receiving regarding these new group booking platforms), that is all changing. CVENT's announcement last week regarding its newly launched Vendor Marketplace represents another interesting step in this online group booking evolution. According to the announcement, the new Marketplace will allow a wide variety of vendors (18 vendor categories and 300 vendors, including A/V, accessibility specialists, rental companies, health and safety consultants) to connect directly with meetings planners during the online RFI or RFP process. With one comment set of meeting details, planners will now be able to receive responses not only from hotels, but also the hundreds of vendors featured in the Marketplace. What might this mean for hoteliers that have traditionally provided many of these ancillary services themselves or via well-known (and sometimes exclusive) vendors, only time will tell. If nothing else, it may be time to re-consider those third-party contractor provisions in your form sales agreements.

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Other news:

### **American Airlines Puts NDC Content on Expedia Websites**

*April 12, 2022 via Travel Weekly*

Expedia Group OTAs are now selling their first NDC-enabled American Airlines product bundle for North American points of sale. The NDC connection was previously available only for European points of sale.

**Tags:** booking, hotels, loyalty programs, online group booking, Online Travel Agencies, online travel companies, technology