



**ADVENTURE TRAVEL**  
TRADE ASSOCIATION

**flywire**



# Creating, Communicating, and Connecting: Technology in Adventure Travel

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# FOREWORD

As you'll see in this report, technology no longer supports only one or two areas of the travel business; rather it touches all of them at varying levels, and often in a semi-integrated way. Technology needs today can no longer be filled with one piece of software to support the needs of the adventure travel industry. Each software solution or software-as-a-service platform has its own area of expertise and likely falls short in other areas.

This has resulted in the need for a collection of technology solutions that can work together in an integrated way either directly or through third-party platforms to realize the greatest benefit. Since many adventure travel companies may not have the ability to add all these components at one time due to the costs involved, their overall technology strategy will help determine which components are important now and others that will be important in the future.

This report provides a broad set of insights that can help provide the basis for starting or enhancing your travel company's technology strategic plan.

**- Jason Reckers, Chief Technology Officer (CTO), ATTA**

Chances are, travelers looking to book the once-in-a-lifetime experiences you provide aren't stuffing a Discman into their carry-on and a phone card into their wallets as they plan and pack for their trips. So why are so many in the industry still relying on the technology we had in the 90's to deliver today's travel experiences?

What's clear in this report is that legacy technology dominates many of the landscapes of today's travel providers. Consider that more than half of the respondents a recent ATTA survey said they are still using word processing or spreadsheet software—or even a pencil and paper—to schedule and manage their on-property activities.<sup>1</sup>

Legacy technology introduces friction to many of the important parts of travel experiences. If you can't ease those parts, travelers will not only look to someone else, they'll even pay more for the things they're looking for, according to recent research from Accenture.<sup>2</sup>

In this report, you'll discover some of the major ways legacy technology is creating challenges for providers, and solutions that can help you focus on what you do best—providing unforgettable experiences.

**- Colin Smyth, VP & GM, Travel, Flywire**

<sup>1</sup><https://www.adventuretravel.biz/research/the-state-of-adventure-accommodations>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.accenture.com/us-en/insights/strategy/acnmedia/Thought-Leadership-Assets/PDF-4/Accenture-Life-Reimagined-Full-Report.pdf>

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# KEY TAKEAWAYS

1

Technological tools can make the jobs of adventure travel company staff easier, by automating marketing, communication, booking, payments, and other parts of the sales process.

2

Most adventure businesses can't afford to leverage all of the technology options available today. Therefore, we often recommend that owners and their teams take time regularly to discuss their technology strategy in the same way they discuss marketing, finance, human resources, and other key business functions.

3

With platform integration in mind, adventure travel companies can grow or change their technology solutions in an effective and affordable way as their business grows and changes.

4

Especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, travelers are looking for more online shopping options, digital communications, and contactless solutions.

5

Technology in the adventure travel industry is no longer only a 'nice to have.' We see this through survey results and in our interactions with businesses in the industry.

# Part I:

## Introduction



# INTRODUCTION

Based on recent research and anecdotal evidence, there is a need for improved booking, payment, scheduling, and customer management software applications in the adventure travel community. Industry members require affordable and user-friendly support for their operations, to support their deep focus on maximizing their guests' experience.

Technology is an essential part of the connectivity needed to enable the tourism industry around the world. Without search engines, websites, email, social media, and other similar tools, potential visitors would find it very difficult to find, research, and book travel services. Technology also enables companies to work more efficiently, by automating tasks traditionally done by staff to free up their time to do more guest-centric activities, widening their networks of resources and contacts, and overall embracing a more global approach to travel.

## **Successful adoption of technology can help adventure travel companies:<sup>3</sup>**

- Improve their products, pricing, promotion, and distribution
- Be more agile and flexible to meet changing demand and environmental shifts
- Run their businesses more efficiently and effectively
- Better meet travelers' preferences for communicating, shopping, and buying digitally

<sup>3</sup>Skift + Amazon Web Services 2021 Digital Transformation Report

# INTRODUCTION

Operating successfully in the new post-pandemic world of travel means going through a “digital transformation,” or an increase in technology adoption to improve efficiency, value, or innovation. Especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, travelers are looking for more online shopping options, digital communications, and contactless solutions.

In the general business world, the COVID-19 crisis led to a rapid acceleration of digitization. Within the first year of the pandemic alone, companies sped up customer and supply-chain interactions and internal operations by three to four years, and the progress of digital or digitally enabled products by a striking seven years.<sup>4</sup> However, the hospitality industry has notoriously lagged behind in technology adoption, and faces many challenges to meet traveler demand for digital services.<sup>5</sup>

This report was developed to look at the current state of technology in adventure travel and to discuss how it can help the industry create, communicate, and connect. Then it provides guidance to organizations looking to implement new solutions, and ends by looking forward to what is next for technology in adventure travel.



Photo by [S. Miqai](#) on [Unsplash](#)

<sup>4</sup><https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/how-covid-19-has-pushed-companies-over-the-technology-tipping-point-and-transformed-business-forever>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.phocuswire.com/is-hospitality-ready-to-service-the-digitally-savvy-travel-consumer>



# BETTERING THE WORLD

Adventure tourism is about more than selling trips, it is also about **improving and maintaining the world's natural, social, and cultural resources**. Many adventure travel businesses are already taking positive actions, and can use technology to share their values and purpose. Technology can give businesses ideas and support for lessening their impact on the environment and fighting climate change. Efforts to do good can be communicated to travelers through social media, information on a website about how a company is participating in carbon offsetting, environmental renewal, or other programs. Specifics about each trip can be discussed, along with ways visitors can reduce their impact and positively contribute to the location they are visiting.

Technology can also help adventure travel businesses with other **important initiatives like diversity, equity, and inclusion**. Connecting with diverse media and channels can offer ways to reach new potential guests, and new ideas for products that appeal to a wider audience. Organizations like [Blacks in Travel and Tourism](#) are great resources for this type of work.

# METHODOLOGY

This report was developed through a combination of primary quantitative interviews, reviewing secondary qualitative research, and anecdotal evidence from ATTA's community of adventure travel organizations. The following industry professionals were interviewed for this report:

- Paul Easto from [Wilderness Scotland](#)
- Russell Walters from ATTA/[Northern Outdoors](#)/[AdventureRes](#)
- Jenny Jewczyk from [Nimmo Bay Resort](#)
- Jason Reckers from ATTA

As always, our community shared their expertise and stories willingly, even when it came to their challenges and points where they acknowledge they need improvement, for the purpose of helping the adventure travel industry as a whole succeed.



© ATTA / Kristen Kellogg

An aerial photograph of a mountain valley. In the foreground, a village with several buildings is visible, including a prominent white church. A yellow construction crane stands near a road. The middle ground shows rolling green hills and a winding road. In the background, majestic mountains rise, with some peaks covered in snow. The sky is clear and blue.

## Part II:

## State of the Industry

# TECHNOLOGY IN ADVENTURE BUSINESSES: STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

One of the biggest challenges for adventure tourism is that many companies in the community are small, with limited resources. Technological tools can make the jobs of adventure travel company staff easier, by automating marketing, communication, booking, payments, and other parts of the sales process. The next pages share key benchmarks related to technology application in travel businesses, and how technology fits into adventure travel.

**Technology should not be seen as a replacement for the invaluable human component of adventure travel, but rather as a support system to facilitate parts of their jobs so they can focus on serving their guests.**

Recent research by the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) suggests that adventure travel companies may not be using technology in the most efficient or effective ways, or that satisfactory technology solutions simply are not available. A March 2021 survey by the WTTC/World Bank found that 94% of tour operators are interested in or planning to make investments in technology/digitization in the near future, as are 45% of accommodations and 64% of DMO/consulting/marketing firms.<sup>6</sup>

Digital transformation is somewhat or very important to 91% of travel businesses, but only 29% think they are doing better than their competitors. Eighty five percent agree that innovation due to the COVID-19 disruption will ultimately help improve the way they do business. In particular, travel companies recognize the importance of gathering and using data to better understand and respond to their customers' needs.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup>WTTC/World Bank pulse 1 survey March 2021

<sup>7</sup>Skift + Amazon Web Services 2021 *Digital Transformation Report*

94%

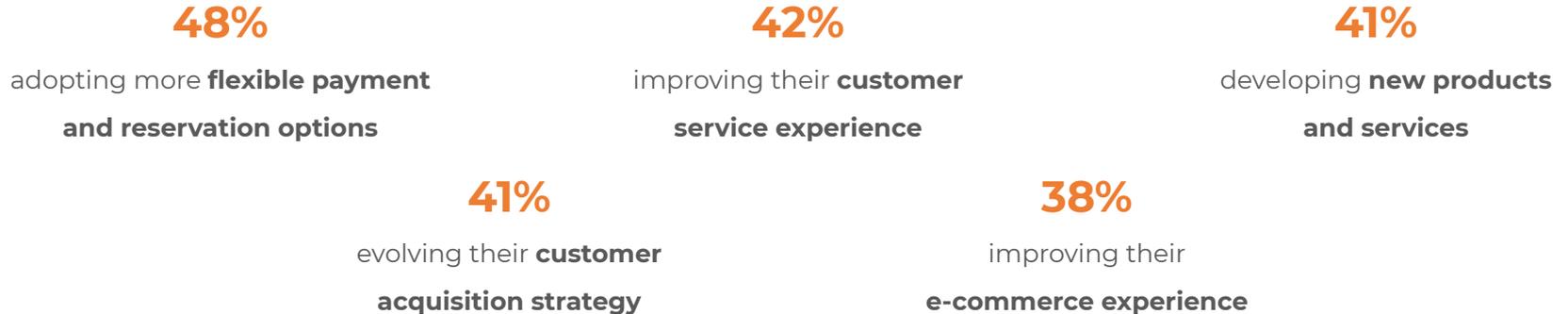
of tour operators are interested in or planning to make investments in technology/digitization in the near future, as are 45% of accommodations and 64% of DMO/consulting/marketing firms.<sup>6</sup>

# THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

The end goal of implementing any new technology should be to improve the customer experience. This could be done directly, like by communicating with travelers quickly in their preferred channel, or indirectly, such as by reducing the time staff spend on administrative tasks so they can focus on guest needs.

High on travelers' wish-lists is flexibility in the way they pay for trips, including delaying or getting a refund for trips, or switching bookings, without penalties. Travelers want to pay for trips in their own currency in a seamless, easy way, and that's influencing who they choose to provide travel services and experiences.<sup>8</sup>

According to a survey by Skift + Amazon Web Services, the top technology priorities for travel companies in 2021 and 2022 are:<sup>9</sup>



<sup>8</sup><https://www.flywire.com/news/travel-spike-projected-as-consumers-plan-to-spend-big-and-extend-stays>

<sup>9</sup>Skift + Amazon Web Services 2021 Digital Transformation Report

# ADVENTURE TRAVEL ACCOMMODATIONS

A survey of adventure travel accommodation providers conducted by the ATTA in February through April 2021 found that over half of the survey respondents are still using word processing or spreadsheet software, or pencil and paper to schedule and manage their on-property activities. Similarly, 20% of respondents use a paper calendar or a spreadsheet software for rate and inventory management.<sup>10</sup> While this may work for some smaller properties, if an easy-to-use and affordable technology solution were available to reduce their administrative workload, it is likely to be adopted.

While all of the respondents to the accommodations survey offer lodging, 90% also have on-property food and beverage outlets, 79% offer on-property activities, and many coordinate booking activities with third-party providers. **This wide variety of service combinations means there is not a one-size-fits all solution for this segment.**

<sup>10</sup><https://www.adventuretravel.biz/research/the-state-of-adventure-accommodations>

# **MARKETING AND ONLINE BOOKING**

Respondents to ATTA's annual 2021 Adventure Travel Trends Snapshot report (data from 2020), had an average of 40,839 social media followers, 8,196 email subscribers, and 3,576 direct mail recipients.<sup>11</sup> The top five most helpful marketing and sales tactics were word of mouth (69% of respondents chose this), tour operator partnerships (48%), email marketing (46%), social media advertising (40%), and content marketing (35%).<sup>12</sup>

When it comes to booking, an average of 69% of Adventure Travel Trends Snapshot global respondents' 2020 bookings were direct (34% through their website, 35% through phone/email/social media), 19% were through a group or partner, 21% through a travel agency, and 8% through an online travel agency (OTA). The most common booking platforms were Facebook (30%), Tripadvisor (20%), and TourRadar (17%). Half of respondents have an online booking system that accepts credit card payments.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup><https://www.adventuretravel.biz/research/2021-adventure-travel-industry-snapshot>

<sup>12, 13</sup><https://www.adventuretravel.biz/research/2021-adventure-travel-industry-snapshot>, respondents could choose multiple options.

# THE “LONG TAIL” OF TRAVEL

Adventure travelers are often interested in visiting emerging tourism destinations that are not ready for, or interested in, hosting mass tourists. This niche is looking for more authentic and immersive experiences that increase their knowledge and support local communities.<sup>14</sup>

Adventure travelers also leave more money in a destination and lead to the creation of more local jobs.<sup>13</sup> Technology is an essential resource to reach, attract, and serve this smaller number of valuable guests, or the long tail.



Source: *Learning from Long Tail Success: Strategies for the Online Retail Distribution of Travel*<sup>15</sup>

These small adventure travel companies are considered part of the “long tail” of travel.<sup>16</sup> While mass tourism comprises the majority of travel, the segment of adventure tourism compares to the retail strategy of selling a lot of custom, niche items in small quantities. Technology is clearly an essential support for the adventure travel industry, offering plenty of tools to assist staff and serve guests. The questions now are what functions it can serve, and how to select the right options for each individual company.

<sup>14</sup><https://www.adventuretravel.biz/research/shaping-the-future-of-adventure-and-cultural-travel>

<sup>15</sup><https://www.adventuretravel.biz/research/adventure-travel-overview-and-market-sizing>

<sup>16</sup><http://vitalwave.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Vital-Wave-Consulting-White-Paper-Strategies-for-the-Online-Retail-Distribution-of-Travel-September-2012.pdf>

A vibrant, high-angle photograph of a waterfall in a dense tropical forest. The water is white and frothy as it falls from the top left, cascading over large, dark, moss-covered rocks. The surrounding forest is thick with green foliage, and the scene is illuminated by natural light, creating a sense of depth and texture. The overall mood is serene and natural.

## Part III:

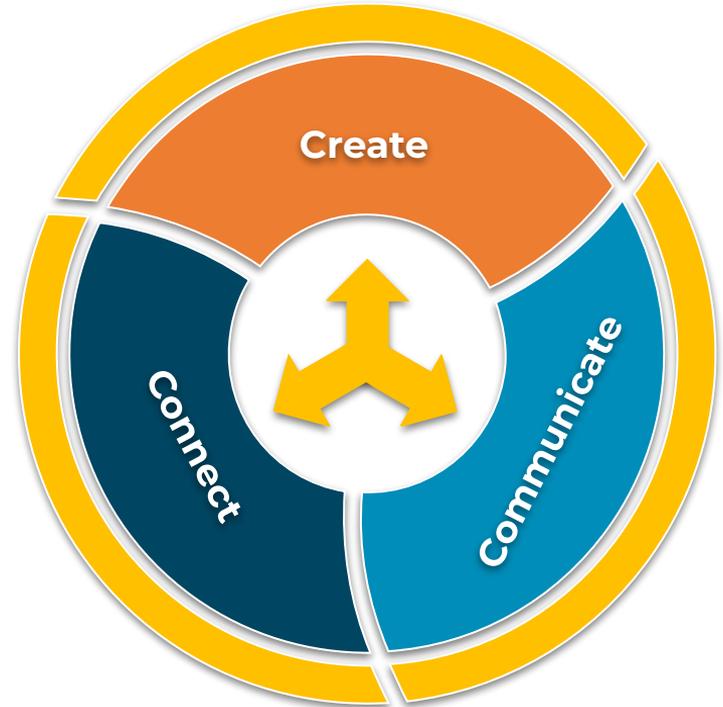
# Technology for Creating, Communicating, and Connecting

# FUNCTIONS OF TECHNOLOGY

While technology has many roles in life and in travel, its three key functions in the purview of adventure travel are **creating, communicating, and connecting.**

These three objectives encompass the creation of a company and its products, promotion and communication with potential customers, and connecting with current and past guests. All three functions build off each other and act to support both the adventure travel company and its clients.

The following pages provide an overview of why technology is needed in adventure businesses and how to leverage it. This section discusses foundational concepts for businesses at the early stages of technology deployment.



# TECHNOLOGY FOR CREATING

The core of any adventure travel business is its product or service offering. While the bulk of this product—the experience itself—can only be delivered at the moment of service, an extensive amount of time is spent in the creation process. The underlying support system is also essential here, to ensure that the service is able to be delivered successfully from start to finish.

In the creation process, technology can be useful for developing the product itself. Companies can research competitors and their offerings, calculate costs and markups to price their products, assemble descriptions and images, create packages, and complete many other tasks done by adventure travel businesses. The Travel Insights with Google tool helps tech-savvy travel businesses see where travel demand is coming from and analyze search trends to see what travelers are looking for.

While the guides are leading trips and the accommodations are renting rooms, technology is also helping the team in the background support the customer-facing activities. Software can be used to manage staff needs; coordinate schedules, requests, and training; pay employees and external invoices; manage incoming funds; track equipment inventory and rentals, and so much more.

# TECHNOLOGY FOR COMMUNICATING

After the product is created and the support systems to successfully implement it are in place, it needs to be explained and promoted to the customer. The most basic tools needed include a website, social media, and a customer relationship management (CRM) system. One key thing to keep in mind is that customers want to be able to contact you using one of their preferred methods (e.g., email, a website chat widget, WhatsApp, Facebook, phone, video chat, text, WeChat, etc.), so you need to offer at least a few options that will be monitored consistently.

Having an updated website with your products listed and contact information easily accessible is an absolute requirement. The website should be responsive, meaning it will automatically adapt to whatever device the user is on at that moment (smartphone, tablet, computer, etc.). It should load quickly and have authentic images and text that explain who you are and what you offer. There are plenty of website creation services available, including affordable template-based systems that you can customize yourself.

Social media is another non-negotiable communications channel. At minimum, your company should have a page on Facebook, a listing on Tripadvisor, and an updated Google Business profile, plus a presence on additional social media that is popular with your target audience. WhatsApp has also recently launched the WhatsApp Business App that allows you to build a business profile and engage with WhatsApp users through chat and voice as your business versus your personal account. Video sites like YouTube offer free hosting services, which you can also use to embed videos into your website and other digital media channels.

Every adventure travel company has different distribution systems that will work best for them. Small boutique tour operators may not want to offer online booking, as they may prefer to have detailed conversations with every guest to learn more about their needs and match them with the perfect product. Online travel agency (OTA) websites work well for reaching lots of potential guests, but they also often charge high commissions, meaning they are not the right choice for everyone. For those looking to increase direct bookings, look for a property or inventory management system that offers an integrated booking widget that can be embedded on your website or social media pages using a few lines of code, as this can make it easier to automate bookings and payments.

# TECHNOLOGY FOR COMMUNICATING

Once your information is available online, it is time to tell your prospective customers about it. While many adventure travel companies are small and independent, and are working with a limited marketing budget, there are plenty of ways to reach your audience. There are a lot of communication channels and methods to keep track of; the key is remembering who your customers are and what they want. A customer relationship management (CRM) system is essentially a database of past, present and future clients, along with contact information and details about their history, preferences, and more. There are three main categories of contacts:

- 1 Prospect:** a potential customer who has not booked yet
- 2 Client:** a guest who has been on a trip with you (or stayed in your accommodation, etc.) that was booked by someone else, but they have not booked themselves yet
- 3 Returning Client:** a client who has booked with you already

These three categories need different messaging, and a good CRM allows you to keep track of who should receive what, and when. Email tools can often integrate with CRMs, so you can pull up an individual person's record in the CRM and see not only notes that your staff has left, but also what emails that person has received.

# TECHNOLOGY FOR COMMUNICATING

One major caveat with communication is that **your message needs to be authentic and professional**. All photos you use should accurately reflect the product you are selling, to set appropriate expectations, and show your target markets. Access to the company's social media pages should be limited to key trusted personnel, and **messaging should be consistent and professional at all times**. Any videos posted on YouTube or other channels should be high quality. Remember that authenticity is not a limiting factor, but rather permission and encouragement to show the special features of your services: guides' personal connections to the region, unique features of your accommodation, or other unique qualities that set you apart from the competition.

**Communication with guests does not stop after their trip**. Ask them to leave reviews on Tripadvisor, OTAs, or other applicable review sites. You can also ask more detailed questions using customer survey tools that integrate with many website and CRM solutions, so reviews can be published online and your staff can track what is going well and what needs to be done differently.

# TECHNOLOGY FOR CONNECTING

There are many **connections, or touch points**, during a guest's journey, and each gives you the opportunity to improve their experience. Think about all the different ways that guests interact with your company—how can you make sure they are all positive?

These might involve quick contacts that do not feel like full communication, like when a past guest interacts with an image your team posts on social media. A small action such as liking or responding to their comment enhances the connection they feel with your company, **overall increasing the likelihood of them returning or recommending you to others.**

**Pre-Trip**

**In-Trip**

**Post-Trip**

# PRE-TRIP CONNECTIONS

Try to do more than the obvious communications like itinerary details and packing lists. If there will be guests on the trip who do not already know each other, offer them a way to connect in advance (with their permission), like by sharing links to their Facebook or Instagram pages.

Remember that any touchpoint with the guest makes an impression, even tasks like taking payment. It is important to make that process simple for them, and ideally you should offer a few ways to pay so they can choose what they are most comfortable with. [Flywire](#) is one solution trusted by ATTA members that offers multiple convenient ways for guests to pay in their own currency.

Also make sure your guests have a way to reach you if they have any problems during their travels. A delayed flight or missed connection can be very stressful, COVID-19 entry requirements can cause confusion, and they will often turn to you as the expert. Offering instant communication methods like WhatsApp or text (while ensuring a quick and helpful response) will make them more comfortable knowing they have a backup plan and someone is there to help them.

**Pre-Trip**

# IN-TRIP CONNECTIONS

While traveling, it is important for your guests to be able to connect with your team at all times. Instant messaging services work well as long as they will have an internet connection. Self-guided tours are becoming more popular, but guests need to feel secure that they will not get lost, and if they have any problems your team will be able to immediately assist.

Most guests will want to be able to connect with friends and family during their trip. In many cases they will bring their own smartphone or other device, and will expect to be able to connect to the internet regularly. You could provide local phones or SIM cards, or carry one central hot spot that guests can use to connect through remotely. Offering “connection opportunities” such as when relaxing at a local cafe with a cup of coffee and a snack will be well-received.

Technology can also be used to connect guests to locals that they meet during trips. For example, you could set up a Facebook or WhatsApp group as a way to maintain a personal connection and build bridges between cultures. If local artists sell their goods online, include a link so the guests can purchase after returning home.

**Pre-Trip**

**In-Trip**

# POST-TRIP CONNECTIONS

Your team is probably already sending thank you emails with a link to your listing on online review sites (if you are not, now is the time to start!). This messaging can also include ways a guest can support conservation in your destination, follow news or get more information. Encourage them to follow you on social media and share your posts with others.

Connecting is more than communicating; it is about building a relationship with past, current, and future guests. Adventure travelers want a life-altering experience and want to tell others about it; they will share your story and bring you new guests if you keep the connection strong and authentic.

**Pre-Trip**

**In-Trip**

**Post-Trip**

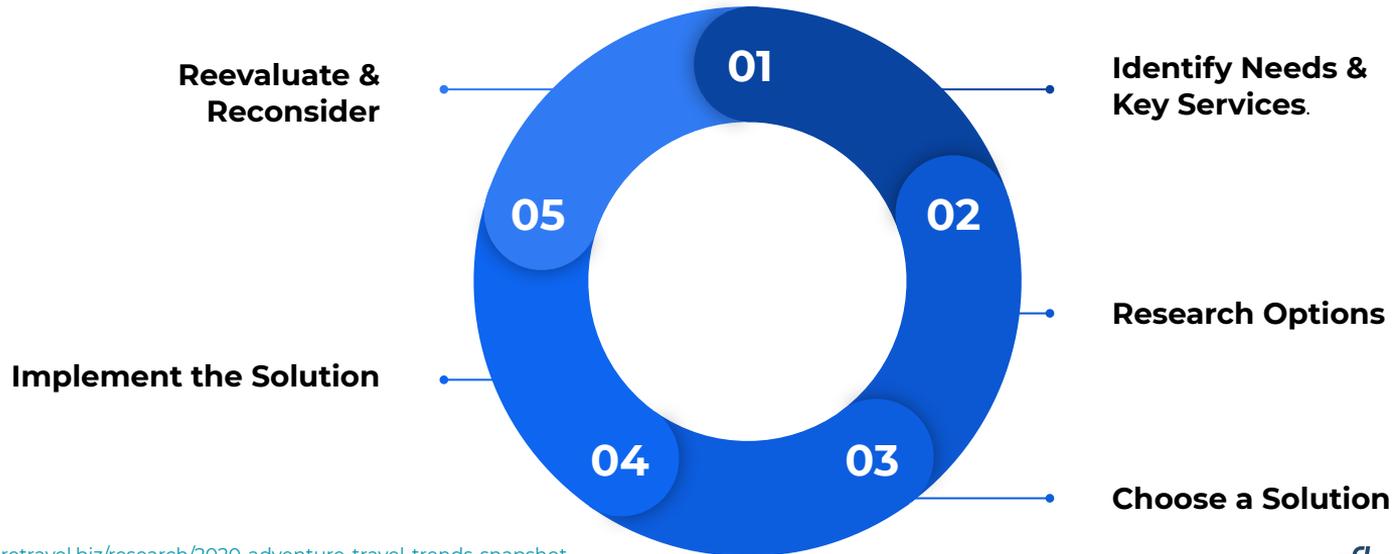


## Part IV:

# Choosing the Right Technology

# CHOOSING THE RIGHT TECHNOLOGY

One of the key challenges facing adventure travel organizations looking to upgrade their technology are the financial and time investment costs required. Especially with the personnel downsizing throughout the industry during COVID-19, employee resources are already stretched thin. With marketing budgets stagnant at 13% of annual revenue (2019 and 2020 data), limited funds are available to invest in new technology that often falls in the marketing realm.<sup>17, 18</sup> The following process may be helpful for adventure travel companies trying to identify what technology is right for them. This section provides general step-by-step guidance how to implement technology in a travel organization.



<sup>17</sup><https://www.adventuretravel.biz/research/2020-adventure-travel-trends-snapshot>  
<sup>18</sup><https://www.adventuretravel.biz/research/2021-adventure-travel-industry-snapshot>

# CASE STUDY: NIMMO BAY

[Nimmo Bay Resort](#) is a luxury family-owned wilderness resort in the heart of Canada's Great Bear Rainforest, on the wild shores of the Pacific Ocean. The property is so remote that the limited internet available is not very reliable, meaning digital devices do not always sync and it is impossible to share large files between the staff in the city and the on-site employees. These **connectivity challenges and a general resistance to change have brought Nimmo Bay Resort to a technological impasse.**

Jenny Jewczyk, Reservations & Sales Manager with Nimmo Bay Resort, says that they have been using much of the same software for twenty years, and it's scary to think about switching to something new. **Change is terrifying.** It is a big commitment to research, choose and implement new technologies, and the possibility of losing everything they have built over the past decades has led to a stagnation. For example, currently the offsite and onsite teams use different sales platforms connected by a plug-in, which is not ideal, but it feels overwhelming to find a better solution. They do not take online reservations, which has been working because they are a small boutique property, but it leads to **challenges with calendar integrations, payments and other logistics.**

According to Jenny, their recent partnership with Flywire has been one success leading them to be more confident in seeking and adopting other solutions. Prior to implementing Flywire's payment software, Nimmo Bay Resort was accepting payments primarily by wire transfer. They were able to collect credit card payments but it was at a high cost, and was a manual and glitchy process. Now with Flywire, Nimmo Bay Resort does not have to worry about security concerns around credit card information, currency conversion is automatic, and **guests have more payment options.**

Nimmo Bay Resort is an example of an adventure travel organization that has recognized their technology challenges, but is not quite sure what to do next. **If you are in this situation too, you are not alone.** The 5-step process outlined in this section is designed to help adventure companies analyze and improve their technology solutions.

# 1. IDENTIFY NEEDS & KEY SERVICES

a.

**Sit down with your staff and talk about their biggest challenges.** Where are they spending unnecessary time and frustration? What ideas do they have for making their jobs easier, allowing them to spend more time on guest relationships? Ask them how much time they spend using inefficient systems or processes—this time is costing your organization money and employees could be doing something to improve the guest experience instead.

b.

**Think about all different areas of your business:** accounting, customer relationship management, website and online booking, customer research, email send tools, social media, marketing, scheduling, property management, graphic design, internal communications, etc. Are there areas where you can trim your budget by implementing new technology (e.g., Do you have an old outdated website that you're paying a third party too much money to manage? Do you want to shift to more direct bookings so less commission is going to OTAs?)

c.

**Think about what your customers want and how you can use technology to improve your relationships and understanding of your clients.** Do your guests often ask about the capability to book online? Do they ask if you have instant chat tools for communication, instead of using email?

d.

**Describe the common themes and challenges, and prioritize them** based on a combination of what will help your company run more effectively and what will maximize the experience for your clients. Define the key services you are looking for in a technology solution.

## 2. RESEARCH OPTIONS

- a. **Based on the needs and key services identified earlier, begin searching for software providers.** This is much easier said than done. There are a multitude of choices out there, and many of them require you to talk to a sales representative to learn about their pricing and options, which can be overwhelming and time consuming.
- b. **Rather than doing a google search, start with talking to your network.** ATTA is a good resource both to learn more about what similar companies are doing, and to identify [possible software providers](#) that already work within the adventure travel industry and understand its unique needs.
- c. **While going through this process, stay focused on your needs.** It may be advantageous to select a provider that can do more than you currently require, but going too far outside your scope will likely mean unnecessary costs, a more complicated system, and all of the new challenges that come along with that. What is the ROI?
- d. **Ask lots of questions and think about different possibilities.** You may uncover information that you did not think of already. Consider options like whether a set subscription fee or a commission would be better for your situation, or if there are add-on solutions available that may be helpful to you in the future.
- e. **Talk to a few possible providers that were recommended to you or that seem to fit your requirements based on the information available on their website.** Any provider should be willing to give you an online demo, a free trial period or a satisfaction guarantee, and as much information as you request.

## 3. CHOOSE A SOLUTION

- a. **Don't choose the first company you talk to.** Look at other possibilities and take your time choosing the right one. A reputable provider should encourage you to do this, and should be able to explain to you why they are a better choice than their competitors.
- b. **Remember that you are the customer, and you have a lot of options.** If a company is insisting on a long-term contract with lots of fees and heavy penalties, or pressuring you to sign immediately, look somewhere else.
- c. **Be sure that regular system updates and upgrades will be available to you with minimal effort, and that the company's support terms are favorable.** Will you be able to reach them when you need assistance?
- d. **If you are not able to find a workable solution, consider creating one.** This may mean selecting two products that can be made to interface and work together, or by building something totally new from the ground up.

## **CASE STUDY: ADVENTURERES**

As a four season lodging and guide service Northern Outdoors had utilized a couple of available reservations systems but could never find something that met our full needs. They had experience with a couple of products that came close but it always seemed they had to compromise, so when their existing provider made a decision to exit the industry they worked with a founding group of four outfitting companies to enhance and develop a reservations system that would meet their complex needs.

Fundamental to the success of this initiative was the fact that the four companies each had different operational strengths, they trusted one another and were invested in developing a flexible system that would meet all of their collective needs. They hired a programmer and met regularly in person and on conference calls (no zoom technology in the early 2000s).

Each of the four operating companies brought something different to the mix: database management, lodging and camping, group marketing skills, resource management and reporting. Their entire focus was to design a system that would work for their businesses; their intention was not necessarily to sell the system to others; this came later.

Over the past 20+ years AdventureRes has tackled numerous enhancements to meet the ever growing and dynamic needs of their core outfitter partners. The system has two full-time staff and is now in use at over 20 outfitting businesses. The strength of the system is that it is flexible and self-configurable allowing each individual operator to set it up according to their specific needs and objectives.

Creating your own system is something that shouldn't be taken lightly. In their case it worked because of the collaborative nature of the founding partners and their desire to build a system that would work for their complex business needs, but it is worth considering.

## 4. IMPLEMENT THE SOLUTION

- a. **Schedule plenty of time with the technology provider to be sure the solution is working correctly and that you (or another person on your team) are comfortable with it.** Scheduled follow-up calls or ongoing support may be valuable. It may be best to do the implementation and training process during a slow time of year. Invest in customization now, to be sure it is done right from the start.
- b. **Ensure that more than one person on your team knows how to use the technology.** Many companies are stuck with old systems that were built by someone who is no longer with the company, leading to difficulties with updating or replacing them.
- c. **Similarly, be sure that everyone on your team who needs to use this technology is trained by the provider before it is launched.** If possible, it is also a good idea to roll out the solution to a small group first to work out any problems. If people are not comfortable with the new system, they will not adopt it, and will keep doing it the old and inefficient way.

## 5. REEVALUATE AND RECONSIDER

a.

**Hopefully the option you selected will work out well.** However, if it does not, you have choices. A reputable company will work with you to address the challenges, give additional training and support, customize your solution, and do the best they can to serve your needs.

b.

**If necessary, take into account what did not work with this solution, further define your needs, and try another.** Your original choice should understand and agree that they are not the best fit, and be cooperative in migrating to a new solution.

c.

**Reevaluate your software solutions on a regular basis.** This may mean every year during the slow season you take a look at your processes and current systems. Are they still serving your needs? Consider talking to your network again to see if there are any better or more affordable options that have come on the market recently. Again, ATTA is a good resource for this process. It may be helpful to have an annual technology plan and then a separate longer-term (e.g., 3 year) wishlist.

# Part V:

## Moving Forward



# MOVING FORWARD

As technology improves and becomes even more pervasive in our daily lives, it will continually affect the way people travel. This can offer a response to concerns about COVID-19 and other possible health crises, provide a way to automate the customization of each individual traveler's experience, give more people around the world the ability to experience travel virtually, and more. This section discusses some trends happening with technology in the travel industry, but there are advances being made every day and endless potential for the future.

## **Multi-Platform Capabilities**

As the industry recovers from COVID-19, travelers will want features like being able to interact remotely with providers across multiple platforms. Consistent messaging is essential, and technology allows companies to update central online resources (such as FAQ or COVID-related website pages) and always link to those pages, rather than displaying inconsistent and possibly outdated information on multiple channels.<sup>19</sup>

## **Tools to Enable Social Distancing**

Another way technology can support travel's recovery from COVID-19 is through tools that allow travelers to identify how crowded or busy an area is before visiting. Google Maps is currently doing this through their "busyness" feature, which shows live information on how many people are currently at a location. Tripadvisor's crowdfree.me system "uses aggregated, historical traffic data from anonymized cell phone location pings from users that have opted in to share their location via their mobile devices." Results show as a heatmap, and the tool also incorporates location safety scores so users can identify public spaces and businesses where COVID-19 risk rates are high.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup><https://www.phocuswire.com/three-ways-digital-cx-can-restore-the-travel-industry>

<sup>20</sup><https://www.phocuswire.com/tripadvisor-tests-tool-to-aid-socially-distanced-travel>

# MOVING FORWARD

## The “Open Traveler”

Looking further into the future, the “open traveler” may become a possibility. In 2018, “open banking” was introduced, where an individual can choose to have all of their financial information stored in one centralized location and made accessible to multiple financial institutions. For travel, this would likely mean having a central repository with information on each traveler like their personal information, passport and visa details, travel-related likes and dislikes, preferred airports and travel brands, and more. This would make it easier for travel marketers to know exactly what a potential guest would be looking for, and would bring awareness to important details like allergies or accessibility limitations. However, questions around privacy and security still remain unanswered before this would become a reality.<sup>21</sup>

## Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality

Technology is also opening doors to new locations for people who do not have the ability to physically travel to new places. Augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) can offer realistic experiences for anyone with access to a digital device. For example, children in school can virtually explore monuments around the world from their classroom, rather than reading a book or watching a video. People with accessibility limitations can climb mountains and dive with whales, from the safety of their homes. This can also help reduce overtourism at sites like Machu Picchu, that are heavily visited and at risk of being damaged. Adventure travel companies can use this technology as a marketing tool or to supplement experiences, by giving realistic previews of a trip, showing what a location was like in the past, and many other creative uses.<sup>22</sup>

## Conclusion

It is important to reiterate that the goal of refining and implementing new technology should not be to replace employees, but rather to support them in doing their jobs so that they can focus on creating, communicating, and connecting to improve the experience of your guests. Technology can also support those processes when chosen and implemented properly, as shown by this guide to technology in adventure travel.

<sup>21</sup><https://www.phocuswire.com/Consumers-gear-up-for-open-banking-now-ready-for-open-traveler>

<sup>22</sup><https://www.morningbrew.com/emerging-tech/stories/2021/07/30/mixed-reality-transform-travel-industry-unexpected-ways-heres>



Flywire, the Adventure Travel Trade Association's Preferred Global Payments Partner, is proud to support ATTA's work, including this report on the state of technology in the adventure industry.

As part of our continued support of the adventure travel community, Flywire is offering all ATTA members a free travel payments assessment. To learn how Flywire can reduce your payment costs and improve your guest experience, request an assessment by clicking the link below:

**[flywire.com/assessment](https://flywire.com/assessment)**

# RESOURCES

The Adventure Travel Trade Association is a great place to start looking for solutions targeted to the adventure travel industry. Here are ATTA's current technology service provider members as of December 2021:

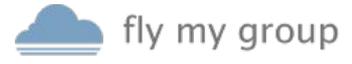
  
[YouLi](#)

  
[Evaneos](#)

  
[Flywire](#)

  
[WeTravel](#)

  
[TravPRO Mobile](#)

  
[Fly My Group](#)



[Mhikes](#)



[TotalAdventure.travel](#)

# Propel Your Adventure Career Forward With the ATTA

Joining the ATTA as a member helps your business develop, introduces you to the best and brightest minds in the industry, and allows you to have a bigger impact by collaborating on a collective purpose.

## Join ATTA as a Member and gain access to:

- Up to 40% savings on online courses
- Business resources, guides, and legal templates
- Free access to educational webinars
- Free access to industry research reports
- Virtual and in-person networking events
- Pro-deals on gear and equipment
- An industry-specific career center

## Become a Professional Member

Limited time COVID-19 price:

**\$99 USD** *for one year.*

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- Safety and Risk Management
- Guide Training
- Adventure Travel Business Management
- Transformation Design Principles
- Developing Self-Guided Tours

## Try one course or enroll in an entire track.

**ATTA Members receive up to 40% off**

Sample free course material today:

[Request Sample Material](#)

# About the ATTA

Established in 1990, the Adventure Travel Trade Association is the largest global network of adventure travel leaders. Our community is made up of ~30,000 individual guides, tour operators, lodges, travel advisors, tourism boards, destination marketing and management organizations, outdoor educators, gear companies and travel media who share a belief and commitment to sustainable tourism. The connections and creativity of this vibrant community come together both virtually and in person to create and deliver the solutions that propel our businesses and our communities toward a responsible and profitable future.

## About our Research

The ATTA strives to produce regular reports that take the pulse of the industry through our membership as well as the global travel industry. In addition, consumer research studies lend insight into the fast paced and changing world of travel and travelers' perceptions of it. At [adventuretravel.biz](https://adventuretravel.biz), our Research Reports can be located that dive deeply into the motivations of adventure travelers, the size of the industry, the landscape and health of the industry at large, as well as other targeted reports on subjects ranging from Travel Agents to adventure travel in specific destinations.

## The ATTA's Web Properties



**ADVENTURE TRAVEL**  
TRADE ASSOCIATION

The ATTA's homepage online  
at [adventuretravel.biz](https://adventuretravel.biz)



**ADVENTURE**  
Travel News

The adventure travel  
industry's source of trade  
news online at  
[adventuretravelnews.com](https://adventuretravelnews.com)



**ADVENTURE**  
.TRAVEL

The traveler's guide to finding  
adventure at [adventure.travel](https://adventure.travel)



**ADVENTURE**  
HUB

ATA's Online Members  
Community at  
[members.adventuretravel.biz](https://members.adventuretravel.biz)



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TRADE ASSOCIATION

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