



Shaping Important Experiences With Discover 7's Eric Grayson

TRAVEL AGENT | LISA IANNUCCI | JULY 18, 2016

Most kids worship athletes and movie stars, but when Eric Grayson was 13 years old he spent his free time researching new hotels, destinations and activities and worshipping Isadore Sharpe, the CEO of the Four Seasons.

“In my adolescent opinion, he had built the best luxury brand in the world,” said the now 27-year-old who is the founder of Discover 7 in New York City. “For my Bar Mitzvah, I received some Four Seasons stock and enjoyed owning a tiny piece of the company, but I also had a long game.”

Although he wasn't old enough at the time to drive a car, he still attended the annual meeting as a shareholder. “I was thrilled to listen to the



PHOTO: Eric Grayson (right) in Iceland. (photo courtesy of Eric Grayson)

executives riff on the future of the industry and describe the values and strategies the Four Seasons relied on to make their brand so superior," he said. "I wasn't such a luxury travel savant that I understood any of the technical or financial terminology, but I did make sure I had the opportunity to personally meet Isadore Sharpe."

Today, Grayson said that he loves sharing his passion with others. "We have an opportunity to enrich people's lives," he said. "Vacations are a time that people look forward to for months or years. The fact that we have a hand in shaping such an important experience is amazing."

Grayson has had his own amazing experiences, exploring Morocco, Botswana's Okavango Delta and Bangkok. Over the past 10 years, he's visited nearly 40 countries and stayed in over 100 luxury hotels and properties.

He said that he started his business with one mission: to offer exceptional customer service. "Clients have responded to that in a very positive way and it has allowed our business to grow quickly through word of mouth," he said. "We are up over 120 percent."

Discovery 7 has a global reach, but Grayson said that his company has established a network of global partners through a program called Local Footsteps. "Through this program, we have partnered with a local guide in more than 30 countries," he said. "These individuals serve as our eyes and ears on the ground. Anything from a new restaurant opening to an interesting local gallery, they are on top of it and we in turn can customize unique itineraries for our clients, ensuring they have amazing experiences."

Recently, Grayson put together a package for a client who is looking to climb Mount Everest. "We take care of everything from matching them up with the best trainers so they are prepared for their climb to taking care of licensing and visas," he said.

He is proud of how far he has come in the industry and credits service and knowledge for his success. "We pride ourselves in offering unmatched service," said Grayson. "We do not have business hours. Many of our clients lead very busy lives and do not want to speak about travel in the middle of the work day. Most people in this business are only available after hours for an emergency. We are available at 9 p.m. on a Tuesday just to speak about a trip to Southeast Asia a year from now."

For more information about Discover 7, visit the [website](#).



Marriott, Starwood and Anbang: The Travel Agent Perspective

TRAVEL AGENT | LISA IANNUCCI | MARCH 29, 2016

It's the most-watched game of travel industry ping pong in a very long time. Hilton encourages travelers to use direct booking, Marriott International follows suit. Marriott International then announces the possibility of acquiring Starwood Hotels and Resorts. The ball is in the court of the now higher bidder, China's Anbang Insurance Group, who upped their bid on Monday afternoon to \$14 billion.

Watching from the stands are travel agents, who wonder how this is all going to play out and, from the looks of it, most agents are extremely concerned.

Eric Grayson of Discover7 Travel admits that Marriott has gone above and beyond most often, but says that consolidation never tends to work in our favor. "In general, when hotel chains compete for our client's business, it means they're more likely to go out of their way for both our client and us," he says.

Not liking the potential takeover at all are Judy Nidetz and Elaine Carey, both affiliates of Travel Experts. "Less competition in our industry breeds higher prices and fewer options available to the consumer," says Nidetz. "This merger will be terrible for the traveler and also the travel agent."



Where Do Travel Agents Go For Travel Advice?

TRAVEL AGENT | LISA IANNUCCI | MARCH 03, 2016

Consumers turn to travel agents for their expertise, but who do travel agents turn to when they need some expert help? After all, they can't visit all destinations and be at the grand opening of every new accommodation and attraction.



Some agents turn to other travel websites for additional research and reviews. "We do look at TripAdvisor," said Jill Petrowsky, owner of Cruise Planners. "Even though it can be all over the place, it gives you the pros and cons of each property based on the traveler, and that is what I count on."

FlyerTalk is the site of choice for Eric Grayson of Discover7 Travel. "I use FlyerTalk a lot," he said. "It's a great tool for looking up thoughts and opinions on luxury hotels. If you're an avid user, you'll get to know other contributors' tastes and preferences. Over time, you realize that you really trust some of them. Offline, we've built a network of local partners around the globe. I rely on them for feedback on properties that I haven't had a chance to visit, as well as must-see locations or restaurants to try."



How Are Travel Agents Faring In The War of Public Perception?

TRAVEL AGENT | [LISA IANNUCCI](#) | MARCH 02, 2016

Within every industry you will find the good and the bad, but there are a few professions that get an almost unfair rap, including doctors, plumbers, auto mechanics and, of course, travel agents. However, with all of the locations to visit, sites to traverse and regulations to learn, there's no denying that travel agents put in a lot of work to create an unforgettable experience for their client. Is the perception of travel agents improving and what level of success are today's agents having educating the general public that they are more important than ever in the land of impersonal OTA bookings?



While things are improving, [Eric Grayson](#) says that there is still a long way to go. "They have a lot to offer, but consumers tend to be drawn to technology," said the founder of Discover 7. "However, once a person gives personalized travel advising a shot, they tend to stick around, at least in my experience. I think the future is bright for all sectors of the travel advising business. We just have to keep getting the word out."



Inside Intel: Travel Agents Share the Apps They Use to Travel Right

TRAVEL TECHNOLOGY | LISA IANNUCCI | FEBRUARY 25, 2016

There are so many apps and so much technology out there that it's hard to choose which ones might help you when you're on the road, so we asked several agents to tell us what apps they rely on.

Packpoint: When he's packing for his next venture, Eric Grayson, founder of Discover 7, says that this is his app of choice. "It's great for generating packing lists. It makes suggestions based on where you'll be going and the type of activities you'll be doing. It then allows you to select a quantity for each item and save the list for future trips."

GateGuru: When he's at the airport, GateGuru helps Grayson to navigate unfamiliar terminals. "The app makes it easy to find good food locations and airline lounges," he said. "It also keeps track of my travel statistics, such as how many miles I've flown and what airports I've visited, which is a big plus for travel nerds."

