

CHOOSING A TOUR RESERVATION SYSTEM – QUESTIONS TO ASK THE SYSTEM SUPPLIER

Software Trials and Demonstrations

You need to know the product will work for your business. The only way you can really know this is if the company will provide you with a trial version or give you a live demonstration which enables you to explore the system's capabilities in respect to particular business needs. If only online demonstrations are available, make sure the size of the demonstration is sufficient to enable you to see the wording/screenshots properly.

- * Do you provide a free software trial? If so, how long?
- * Can you give me a customised demonstration tailored to my business requirements?
- * What is the background of your sales and installation staff? Do they have the knowledge to understand my requirements?
- * Can you supply an expert to investigate how the system can be implemented to achieve maximum efficiencies and savings in the tour operation's processes? If so, what is the cost?

System Capabilities

Prepare a list of what your business requires in a reservation system – some examples are below.

- * Does the system provide a web booking capability with live availability?
- * Can the system calculate live availability taking into account shared resourcing needs (eg. buses, drivers)
- * Does the system have a tour content management module for my website? (*Enabling you to update tour details, photos, etc, directly from the system in real-time – saving you web development costs and providing instantaneous web updates to tour information*)
- * What features are available for tour packaging and working with other operators?
- * Does the system provide the reports with the fields I need? If not, can custom reports be produced and at what cost?
- * Does your system integrate with the tour operation's accounting system? If not, can it export data, which can then be imported into the accounting system?
- * Does the system provide audit trails to track user actions?
- * What access permission levels can be set and how detailed can they be for each user or group of users?
- * Does the system cater to special circumstances, eg. hop-on, hop-off tour operations giving customers the ability to purchase passes and book their sectors online?
- * Is there the ability to set and allocate tasks or diary notes for review by individuals or groups, with alert notices (email, pop up notices)?
- * Is it possible to track a customer's booking history?
- * Are there multi-passenger booking capabilities?
- * How does the system help me to reconcile accounts (daily banking, agent invoicing, etc)?
- * Does the system have the capability to produce invoices?
- * Does the system have multi-currency capabilities with the ability to invoice and take payment in any currency?
- * What are the system's CRM (customer relationship management) capabilities?

System Capacity

- * Are there options to upgrade to a more comprehensive product as the business grows?
- * Can the product be customised and to what degree?

Distribution Channels

- * Do you have direct agent booking capabilities **available to any agent of any size in any country** which enables **direct** agent-operator relationships/negotiation of commissions? (eg. for use by a local caravan park, a small overseas travel agent, a large inbound tour operator, wholesaler, another operator acting as an agent)
- * Do you provide an agent login for my website?
- * If in Australia, are you one of the tour reservation systems connected to the TXA (Tourism Exchange Australia) which means tour information and availability data can be made to a wide range of distribution channels with commissions set by the distribution channel?

References

The most reliable form of references and testimonials is those you obtain yourself. Be aware that some software companies may offer financial incentives to their clients to bring another client on board – this may affect the value of their testimonial.

- * Can you provide a **full list of tour operator** clients (*ensure they are tour operators only as tour operators have different requirements to accommodation places*)?
- * Do you provide incentives to your clients and other parties to refer or onsell your tour reservation system?

Also query tour operators generally. The best advice may come from companies who have been operating for some time, are very computer knowledgeable and may have had experience with several different reservation systems.

System Costs

- * Remote hosted systems – how much to use the systems and all related costs including optional extras?
- * Hosted systems – how much for licensing, installation, training, maintenance, upgrades? *An important consideration with pricing for upgrades is: if customisations have been made to the product, will extra development time be charged to bring your customisations in line with the new product release?*
- * Commissions on web or agent bookings – how much is charged?
- * If customisations are required and possible, on what basis do you charge and how much?
- * Are there any extra fees associated with support?
- * How much is charged for training, initially and if required later (eg. staff change)
- * Real-time credit card processing – see below.

Support

- * What type of support is provided and how does the support process work?
- * Is assistance provided with product setup?
- * Are comprehensive user documentation/guides available?

Real-time Credit Card Processing

- * What payment gateways work with your system in my country?
- * How much does it cost to set up a payment gateway?
- * What is the per transaction payment gateway charge?

You will also need to ask your bank: is my credit card merchant facility an e-merchant facility? What are the fees for the e-merchant facility including transaction fees and is the e-merchant facility one that will work with the reservation system's chosen gateway suppliers?

QUERIES REGARDING RESPAX RESERVATION SOFTWARE

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