

by kate rice

# cutting through the clutter

TRIPBLIP LETS YOU MATCH YOUR CLIENTS' VACATION DREAMS WITH YOUR PREFERRED SUPPLIERS

Passport Online, Inc., has introduced a new product that automates matching up your clients' vacation needs with your preferred suppliers' products. The new tool, called TripBlip, is available, free, to all subscribers of Passport Online's VacationPort and NexCite products.

Your clients download the software for TripBlip from your website and install it on their computers' desktops. They then create profiles for up to three different vacations—one could be a Christmas ski trip, another could be a midwinter island getaway, yet another could be a family vacation. TripBlip then constantly searches your preferred suppliers for vacations that match that profile and sends that to the consumer. This means your clients are receiving only offers that match the profiles they create—and those offers come from your preferred suppliers.

"With TripBlip, everybody wins," says Greg Kott, president of Passport Online. "For the supplier it's a way to directly reach consumers who are very highly targeted based on their specific travel profile that they've created. For the travel agent it's a win because it's a product that sits on the consumer's desktop and is branded for the travel agency, and puts the travel agency in front of the consumer 24-7."

Finally, he says, it's a win for consumers because they're receiving specials that specifically meet their vacation criteria, eliminating the clutter they must often cut through. And they're receiving it from their trusted agent.

"Once you fill it out, it's running in the background and continuously searching for matching vacations," says Kott. "You get the best of both worlds—you get Internet delivery of vacations, but you also get the travel expert who can help make it happen."

Passport Online has created a number of marketing vehicles for you to use to tell your clients about the product. These can be posted on your agency's website or emailed to clients. Your agency's branding and contact information is embedded in each individual TripBlip. Clients can also send these to their friends, turning TripBlip into a viral marketing tool for you.

The first iteration of TripBlip was a desktop version, but in August the company launched a web version. "Some consumers don't want to download and install software on their computers, so instead we let them use TripBlip Online," says Kott. Consumers go to their own customized website, where they can create trip profiles as well as specify how they prefer to be notified of their vacation offers—they can get them via email, instant message, RSS and, eventually, on their cell phone. They then go to their personal website to view the deal.

When your customers use the desktop version, they

The screenshot shows the Passport Online website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for Home, About Us, Travel Agents, Travel Suppliers, Consortia, News, Training, Contact Us, and Member Login. Below this is a banner for "Unleashing the Power of the Internet to Build LEISURE TRAVEL SCALE". A sidebar on the left contains a menu with items like VacationPort, NexCite, NexCite Express, Email Marketing Services, Host Agencies and Independent Agents, and Demos. The main content area features several sections: "Serving the Travel Agent Community" with a paragraph about internet presence; "VacationPort" with a paragraph about its integrated system; "NexCite" with a paragraph about its website integration; "NexCite Express" with a paragraph about its dynamic web site program; and "Email Delivery Services". There are also logos for VacationPort and NexCite, and a small image of a magazine cover titled "AGENT@HOME".

TRIPBLIP IS AVAILABLE FREE TO ALL SUBSCRIBERS OF PASSPORT ONLINE'S VACATIONPORT AND NEXCITE PRODUCTS.

download it and install it. When TripBlip finds a qualifying vacation, an alert pops up and your client simply clicks on the TripBlip icon to see what the latest deal is.

TripBlip helps you protect your preferred supplier relationships while watching out for your customers. "We wanted to ensure that TripBlip would be flexible enough to support the wide variety of travel types, but we also wanted to be sure it protected the preferred vendor relationships that support an agent's bottom line," says Kott.

Consumers love it, according to Sherrie Funk, president of Just Cruising Plus, Nashville, Tenn. Her agency implemented TripBlip immediately after being introduced to it at the annual Vacation.com conference this summer. Funk promoted TripBlip in her weekly email blast; 100 clients immediately signed up for it. She continues to promote it, telling her clients, "You've heard of ding! fares, now there's TripBlip." She tells her customers that instead of getting inundated with emails about a variety of trips, they get emails only about trips they've expressed interest in. And her customers continue to sign up daily.

Funk's website features a testimonial from another client who describes it as "easy to use" and featuring offers that are "awesome." She said that it enabled her to find the vacation she wanted without any hassle.

Passport Online's signature products are VacationPort, which provides agents with leisure travel content, a search engine and marketing tools, and NexCite, a complete website solution that Passport Online hosts for agencies. 🌐

for more information

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