

How Travel Leaders Built User-generated Content from 4,000 Agents and Increased Leads 91%

BRIAN HEGARTY

Vice President of Marketing,
Travel Leaders Group

CHALLENGE

A Rapidly-Changing Travel Market



CHALLENGE

Lead Gen Driving Deal Seekers



A close-up, shallow depth-of-field photograph of a person's hands typing on a laptop keyboard. The background is heavily blurred, showing what appears to be a multi-monitor workstation in an office environment. The lighting is soft and focused on the hands and the keys.

OPPORTUNITY

Selling the Travel Agents (Not Travel)

THE NEW CHALLENGE

Evolving to Reach Those Who May Not Consider a Travel Agent





The Travel Leaders Group Customer

Travel Leaders Group





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- **Understanding the role of TLG is to sell the travel agent**
- **Equipping travel agents to serve customers better**

User-Generated Content

The Travel Leaders Group approach



Focus on Serving the Individual

Understanding the challenge we are solving



Lead Generation was the Wrong Goal

- Unqualified inquiries through third-party channels resulted in **low-quality traffic and leads** that frustrated agents
- Randomized assignment of leads that did qualify meant a **disconnect between the customer's needs** and the agent's expertise



Customer: Kate
Mom of 2, looking to
book a Disney cruise



Agent: Thomas
Specializes in European bicycling
tours and foodie getaways

The Right Equation: What are we really selling?

Not this:



But this:



The Right Equation: What are we really selling?

Not this:

How do you merchandize and
market 4,000 unique agents?

LEADERS
GROUP

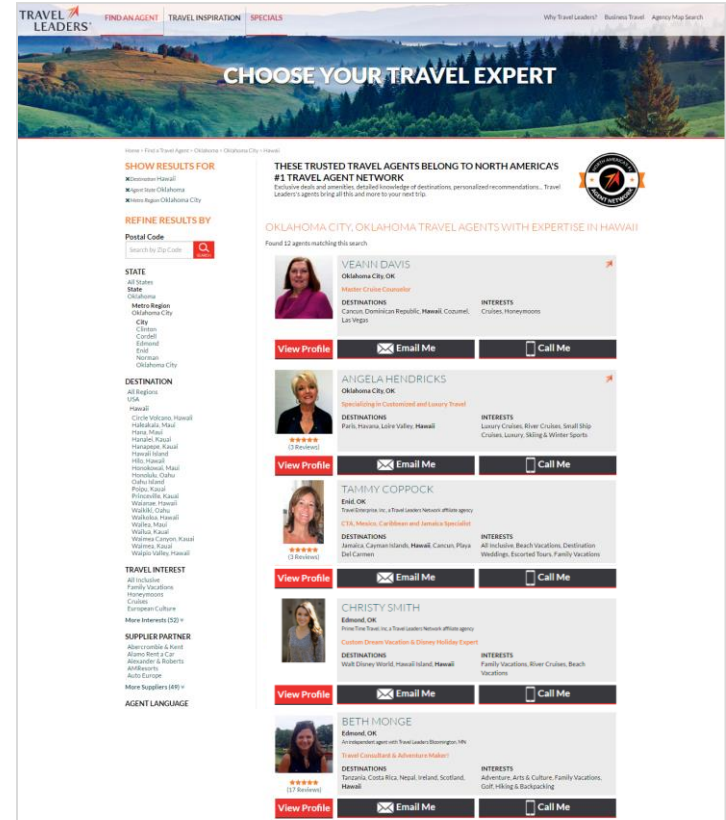
Build the User-Generated Content Machine

To run perpetually and at scale



Agent Profiler Platform

- A marketplace of agents who have qualified attributes in defined areas of expertise:
 - Destinations,
 - Interests and types of travel
 - Suppliers
- This allows us to present search results to prospects with agents who match the expertise qualifications that a customer is looking for
- The platform was planned, developed and maintained in-house by the TLG marketing and dev teams



Implementation and Execution

Training

- Training, tip sheets and best practices
- Online training sessions on-demand
- Workshop sessions at events

Adoption

- Leveraging the audience of agents who had a **desire to drive new traffic** and no resources to drive demand
- The program feeds itself, **success drives the agents to engage** in improving their profiles



Storytelling Workshops

Equipping Travel Agents to Tell Their Story




- Fostering content development skills
- Giving the agents resources – help them do what we can't:
 - Discovering their value proposition
 - Capture and telling their stories
 - Writing and editing
- Proving the case with successful early adopters to encourage growth



The screenshot shows a profile for Yvonne Campbell, a travel agent for TL Network. The page includes a navigation bar with links like 'FIND AN AGENT', 'TRAVEL INSPIRATION', and 'SPECIALS'. The profile section features a photo of Yvonne, her name, location (Whitby, Ontario), and a title 'DESTINATION WEDDING AND GROUP TRAVEL SPECIALIST'. Below this is a bio, a photo of her with a mascot, and several paragraphs of text describing her experience and goals. The page also lists her destinations, interests, and awards.

TL NETWORK • FIND AN AGENT TRAVEL INSPIRATION SPECIALS #iTravelBetter Why TL Network? Agency Map Search

Home > Find a Travel Agent > Ontario > Yvonne Campbell


[« Back to Search Results](#)


★★★★★ See All
32 Reviews | 100% Recommended
 

 Email Me  Call Me

YVONNE CAMPBELL
Whitby, Ontario Travel Agent
An independent agent with Nexion CA in London, ON, a TL Network affiliate agency

DESTINATION WEDDING AND GROUP TRAVEL SPECIALIST


Quite the welcome at Beaches Ocho Rios!!!

A native of Jamaica, I have always had a thing for warm weather and natural beauty. Although I spent the majority of my childhood in Ontario, I long fostered the desire to see the world-including ofcourse the Caribbean. I still live in Ontario, but I also do enjoy travelling whenever and wherever possible.

Ten(10) years ago, after realizing just how much I had learned on my many journeys, I realized that my adventure-loving, detail-driven personality would make me the perfect travel consultant.

I had long enjoyed telling my friends and family members about my exciting vacations and giving them advice about their respective trips, but until this revelation occurred, I failed to realize that I could make a career by pursuing three of the things I love most: researching unique destinations, travelling to those destinations and then using my experience to help others.

Today, one of my chief goals is to remain at the forefront of the rapidly changing travel industry. This means that I am constantly striving to gain new certifications. Currently, I am certified as a Grenada Specialist, Sandals Specialist, Jamaica Travel Specialist, AMResorts Master Agent, Cruise Line International Affiliate and a member of the Barbados Elite Club.

Because the beautiful waters and white sandy beaches are perfect for Destination Weddings and Honeymoons, I have also completed certifications to ensure I am providing the best in services.

Although I boast in-depth knowledge about a variety of travel destinations, I believe that I am best suited to helping vacationers eager to explore the Caribbean. Whether these tourists are looking to book cruises, relax at all-inclusive resorts or make new friends during escorted tours, I can provide the targeted advice and problem solving skills necessary for the minimization of vacation stress.

DESTINATIONS
Barbados, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, St. Lucia

INTERESTS
Bachelorette Parties & Girlfriend Getaways, Destination Weddings, Honeymoons, Groups

SUPPLIER PARTNERS
Royal Caribbean International

CERTIFICATES & AWARDS
Certified Sandals Specialist , Destination Wedding and Honeymoon Specialist , Jamaica Travel Specialist , [See All](#)

Equipping Travel Agents to Tell Their Story

[illegible][illegible][illegible][illegible]

Continually Evolve the Program

Investment doesn't end at launch



Measure and Adjust, Test and Optimize

- **User testing**
 - Website UX
 - Mobile focus
 - Recorded sessions
- **Data analysis**
 - Acquisition channels — SEO/SEM/PPC, 3rd Party, email, social, etc...
 - Matching algorithms
- **Weekly and monthly tweaks**
 - Iterative development approach
- **A/B testing:** Button placement, multivariate, headline placement
- **Agent participation optimization**

Agent Engagement Trends

- **Content is king**

- Agent profiles with enhanced content received **91% more leads** vs. agents with basic profiles

- **Technology facilitates opportunity**

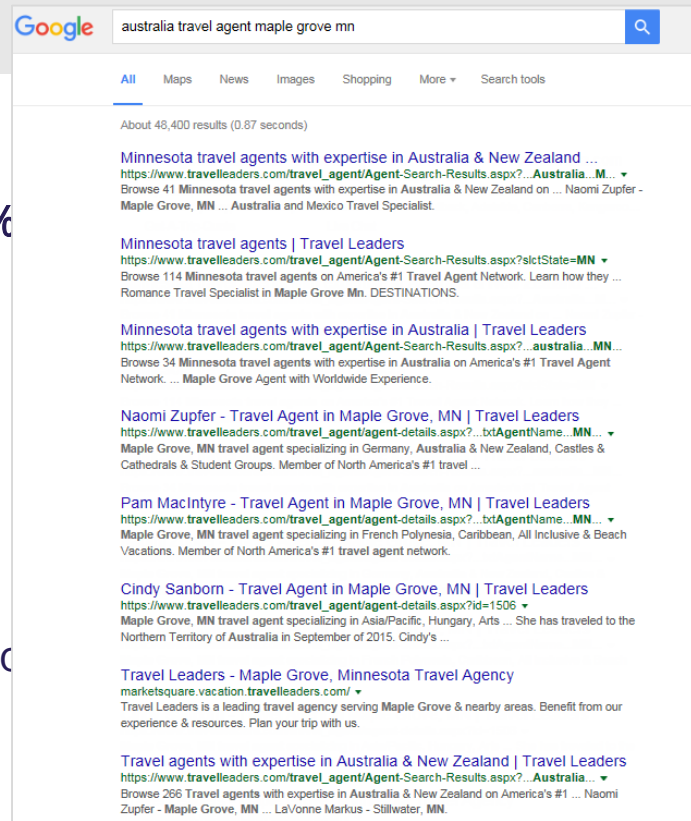
- Faceted search functionality expanded Google indexed pages from a **few hundred to 100K**

- **Value of organic traffic**

- **SEO/SEM** accounts for **25%** of site traffic but **70%** of leads generated

- **Speed wins**

- Agents who respond to a lead **within 24 hours** have a **75% increased chance** of closing the lead



Pushing for Improvement: Ratings and reviews

- Agents were nervous to launch a feedback mechanism
- Made it optional & provided training on how to turn a negative review into a positive
- Less than half the agents have it on their profile
- Almost 20,000 reviews published on all profiles
- Search results now favor agent with more reviews

★★★★★ Wonderful Wedding Vacay in Jamaica

Reviewed By **Ace** - **Trinidad and Tobago** | Traveled to

Please let me say first that I have been to Jamaica numerous times. This time I thoroughly enjoyed the destination wedding organized and overseen by Yvonne. Yvonne was always pleasant and helpful to everyone and she took care of the smallest detail. Yvonne has now become Facebook friends with many who attended. I think one of the reasons Yvonne is excellent at what she does is that she is genuinely warm and people gravitate to her. I would strongly recommend Yvonne to anyone desirous of a pleasantly memorable vacation or event.

✓ I would recommend this agent to my family and friends

Was this review helpful to you? YES | NO

★★★★★ Taurus Milestone Cruise

Reviewed By **Marlene** - **Brampton, Ontario** | Traveled to

Yvonne was helpful, patient and very professional in helping us plan our cruise to celebrate my sister's 50th birthday. We had 42 people on our cruise and she made sure everyone was well taken care of. She responded to my emails and our many other questions in a timely manner. She arranged for our flights, some of our group activities on board, had folders printed for each of us, chocolate and wine in each stateroom. Overall everyone was very happy with her services.

✓ I would recommend this agent to my family and friends

Was this review helpful to you? YES | NO

Pushing for Improvement: Ratings and reviews

- Agents were nervous to launch a feedback mechanism
- Made it optional, and provided training on how to turn a

Agent profiles with ratings/reviews received 85% more leads vs. agents with no ratings.

Yvonne has now become Facebook friends with many who attended. I think one of the reasons Yvonne is excellent at what she does is that she is genuinely warm and people gravitate to her. I would strongly recommend Yvonne to anyone desirous of a pleasantly memorable vacation or event.

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Never Stop Innovating

What have we learned?

- Focus on agent as product
- AGC is the 'secret sauce' to success
 - More unique content = more lines in the water
 - Higher quality content = better bait
- Customers favor expertise over convenience of location

What is new? What is next?

- Travel Leaders Network impact
- Network affect
 - More Agents = More Unique Content = More Authority = More Leads
- Result = 30%+ YOY growth in Q1

Expand the Program

Broader (campaigns) and deeper (funnel)



Broader: Personalized agent campaign

- Incorporating profiles into specific marketing promotions
 - Sign off and call-to-action from personal agent

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Travel Leaders
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VACATION CODE: 188
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ENJOY EVERY MOMENT

Hi, I'm Brian Hegarty
I can help you personalize your travel plans. Learn more about me.

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Booking Period: 10/01/2015 - 10/31/2015 Travel Period: 1/1/2016 - 12/31/2016 Vacation Code: 188

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Deeper: Growing beyond the travel agent market

- Moving up the funnel, **optimizing demand**
- Very specific, **high-quality content** supporting customer research habits, decision process and buyer journey
- **Test pilot** a relatively untapped market segment, then expand



Test Segment #1

Destination
Weddings &
Honeymoons

Perpetual Demand Strategy

- **A new brand**
 - Lifestyle brand — emotional connection of WHY people travel
- **Perpetual demand generation platform**
 - Customer-centric and content-focused
- **The importance of the research you conducted**
 - Customer journey
 - Persona targets
 - Content mapping
- **Content variety targeted to audience**
- **Transformation**
 - People, process, technology, content, data

The Results

Results: Metrics

- 100,000 leads generated
- 25% conversion rate from lead to closed won
- \$5,000 average sale
- \$125,000,000 in sales generated from this program



Brian's Key Learnings

- Business is P2P
- UCG Personalizes your brand
 - Authenticity, passion & credibility
- Life moves fast
- Good to be aware of trends — bad to just be trendy
 - Know your customers & your product
 - Build foundation on core fundamentals

Roundtable Discussion

User-Generated Content:
Build, scale and evolve a content machine to drive
quality leads and sales

BRIAN HEGARTY

Vice President of Marketing,
Travel Leaders Group

Roundtable

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Thank You!

Brian Hegarty,
Travel Leaders Group