ARC Travel Connect: Jeff Katz

Travel industry veterans (and old competitors) Jeff Katz and Jay Walker are rolling out new ventures in the travel industry. We were lucky to have the opportunity to interview both men onstage last week at the **ARC Connect Event** in Washington, DC.

Jeff began his career in the airline industry at **American Airlines**, where he held, as I teased him last week, at least 10 or 12 different titles. Not really. But it seems that way.

He then moved to **Sabre** before becoming President and CEO of **Swiss**. He returned to the U.S. in 2000 as founding Chairman, President and CEO of **Orbitz**. Since leaving **Orbitz** in 2004, Jeff has been involved in a number of tech start-ups. Jeff holds a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from the University of California, Davis; an M.S. in Mechanical Engineering from Stanford, and an M.S. in Aeronautics and Astronautics from MIT. He is also a pilot.

Here are some highlights from what turned out to be a lively 90 minute discussion with both about their new ventures, their experiences with Bob Crandall, the future of the GDS business model, the importance of imagination... and more.

Journera. What is it?

If you, like me, are having trouble trying to figure out how to pronounce Jeff's new venture, I offer up a suggestion from Jay that he made as all of us were waiting to go onstage last week. "Think of it as an Italian name...Joor *neara*." Yep. That works.

Essentially, **Journera** is the culmination of what Jeff has been talking about for the last couple of years. Subscribers may recall I wrote here twice last year about presentations I saw him make about his "concept" to take travel information and make it accessible to travelers.

The first time I saw Jeff present the concept that was to become "**Dihedral**", now **Journera**, was last year at **The BeatLive** in Washington early in October. The second time was at a *Business Travel News* "Travel Trends and Forecasts" event in San Francisco last November.

Without getting into the details of how the new product works, let me quote Jeff from last week when he introduced his new product and explained how it would change how we currently manage our travel.

"**Journera i**s a new idea, although part of it will not sound new to any of you who have been around the industry for a long time. But the principal idea is that [it is] what we need in this world where data is the new currency. This notion of facilitating and managing data, and valuing data becomes more and more important to every business.

Journera is a set of standards and an infrastructure that will allow both companies that own apps (can be an app on your phone, a wearable device, it could be a website, it could be a direct line into a telephone center) and travel providers (publishers) to connect through this infrastructure that sets rules and conditions as to how that data is passed.

What [**Journera** does is control what] can be done with data, and who has access to the data that is being passed along on a very discrete scale. When you do that you can begin to aggregate all of this information into a common view, let's call it, of the customer's journey. It's this view of the customer's journey that becomes essential to creating better customer experiences."

Got that?

Let me give you an example of how this will work.

Let's assume **Journera** has run the test traps and is up and running, utilizing its major subscriber partners. This is not something you will sign up for. It is not something you purchase. **Journera** will run in the background, connecting the data concerning your travel – allowing both you and your travel partners to access it.

So let's say you have a reservation on **American Airlines**, you have a room booked at a **Marriott** and your flight is now running four hours late. Normally the passenger would be responsible for contacting the hotel to let it know that they are, indeed, running four hours late, in an effort to keep the hotel from giving their room away.

But after **Journera** is up and running, the data from **Marriott** and **American** will be conjoined so that if you open up your **American Airlines** app, for instance, that hotel reservation will not only be a part of your **American** app, but **Marriott** would already know your flight was late.

What makes all of this possible? The GXR, or Global Experience Record. Unlike a PNR that is a traveler's key to only their *airline* experience, the GXR is a record that tracks more than just one sector of a traveler's travel itinerary.

Another potential partner, for example – **Weather.com**. Think how convenient it would be not to have to scroll through all the different cities you are going to travel to in the next week. You've done it. I've done it. Instead, **Weather.com** would be privy to your travels and

be able to provide you, automatically, with updated weather forecasts tailored to your travel that has been booked. Without you having to go look for it. Because the information would be subscribed to the GXR.

Journera will be rolled out slowly, as each publisher of data signs on. It will work "behind the scenes," if you will, as it slowly takes on the task of assimilating more and more data into a format that is then accessible to both the publisher and the user.

As Jeff said in a recent interview in which he talked about the complexities of devices, platforms, and data that travelers interact with these days, "It's like a Swiss Army knife of apps in a sock drawer of data. The metaphor is ...nothing really matches but I know it is in there somewhere."

As I mentioned last week, major backers/participants of the new venture include **Boston Consulting Group**, **American Airlines**, **United Airlines**, **Hilton, Hyatt**, **Intercontinental Hotel Group** and **Marriott International**.

Timetable for implementation? First half of 2017. But the project will be rolled out in very small bits – or as Jeff put it, "measured in use cases." It's a specific type of implementation that can be very specific – for example, the late check-out case between one airline and one hotel and one class of travelers.

"The great thing about use cases is that it allows us to come to market fairly broadly, but also with a lot of experimentation so we can test, and then statistically measure how much value we created for the customer," Jeff explained. "How much value did we create with this little data exchange between these customers and these travel providers?"

He then explained the company will grow, depending on the information that is gleaned from the use cases. Thus the company will then move towards expanding those areas that provide the most value in the travel marketplace.

I like this concept. I liked it when Jeff first presented the "big picture" argument for it last year. I like it even better now that I know how it is going to work. Even though, as I told Jeff on stage last week, some of it borders on that "creepiness" factor of too many people knowing what I am doing. And when.

But that's a fight I realize was lost a long time ago. And am reminded of everytime I see my calendar on the phone auto-populate my latest airline reservation. If it helps, Jeff said last week that the companies involved will not share any personal data.