ATCO SOFTWARE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 11, 2004

Kauai based ATCO Software launches real-time online connectivity for "add-on" travel products, Optional Tours & Attractions.

The web service, developed in collaboration with suppliers and software developers, will be proposed as an industry standard by Viator and others

Princeville, November 11, 2004: Hawaii software developer ATCO Software LLC announced today that Viator, the leading online aggregator of add-on travel products – sightseeing, tours, attractions, passes & transfers – has announced the launch of its "Direct Connect" web service. Developed in collaboration with a group of US and European suppliers and software developers, the web service is designed to deliver the benefits of real-time inventory access that are viewed as standard in the air, hotel and car markets, but do not exist today in the add-ons space. Kauai based ATCO Software played a lead role in the development of the proposed new interconnect standard for the tour industry.

Viator released its own press release on the software on November 8, outlining many of the specifics of the program.

Release 1.0 of the web service, which covers basic availability request and booking confirmation functions, goes into production later this month for booking confirmations between Viator and one of its Hawaiian suppliers, Mary Charles & Associates (MC&A). MC&A uses software from ATCO. Discussing the initiative, ATCO President Tom Blankley said "We expect most of our supplier customers to quickly adopt the Direct Connect model. It delivers immediate cost benefits by fully automating the booking process, and allows suppliers to make more of their inventory available for sale right up to the day of travel. This sector has been crying out for some uniform and independent direction on connectivity, and this initiative certainly delivers it."

Discussing technical aspects of the initiative, Viator CTO Jordan Digby said the web service follows OTA (OpenTravel™ Alliance) guidelines carefully, and that the company has proposed Release 1.0 as the basis for a more comprehensive, OTA-supported standard for the entire industry. "By sticking closely to established OTA guidelines and only including very basic functionality in this first release, we're confident we can capture the interest of other OTA members," said Digby. "Already we've been overwhelmed by support from our own suppliers, many of whom are focused on streamlining their operations and see this as a logical step in that direction," he said.

OTA comprises major airlines, hoteliers, car rental companies, leisure suppliers, travel agencies, global distribution systems (GDS), technology providers and other interested parties working to create and implement industry-wide, open e-business specifications.

The objective of these specifications is to form a common e-business language to support and encourage development of systems related to travelers and the travel industry.

London-based Evan Evans Tours also collaborated with Viator on development of the web service. Evan Evans' Managing Director Steve Wayling said participating in the initiative was a simple decision. "We handle tens of thousands of bookings each month and there are costs associated with processing each one of them. Phone, fax and even email bookings are all high-cost, so we see great potential in shifting our business towards 'hands-free' bookings from distribution partners who adopt this web service. The fact that Viator is proposing an open standard and not a proprietary solution made this an easy decision," he said.

Mark Mueller, President of American Trans Data, a software company based in Santa Ana, California, is also developing support for the web service. "Our AL Tour System software is used by 200 coach tour and charter operators throughout the US. They never stop looking for ways to cut costs, and given the growth in bookings from the web, this is an obvious direction. We expect many of our users to adopt this new web service as soon as we release it," he said.

Viator CEO Rod Cuthbert said the company is keen for other distributors and resellers of add-on travel products to adopt the web service as an emerging standard. "Whether a reseller is web-based or a traditional wholesaler selling through off-line channels, the opportunity exists to increase efficiencies and reduce costs on both sides of the transaction. We're inviting add-on suppliers, online and offline wholesalers and any other party that process high volumes of add-on bookings to get involved; it's a long overdue initiative for this sector and there is no time like the present to get started," he said.

Since the introduction of its web-based vouchering system in 2001, ATCO Software has earned market share with its affordable, real-time web-based suite of vouchering and reservation software. The company's current client list includes many of Hawaii's most prominent resorts, hotels, attraction providers and timeshare companies. A growing segment of ATCO's business is the online travel industry, eager to access ATCO's innovative real-time web-based software. ATCO, a Hawaii QHTB, is based in Princeville, Kauai but maintains offices at the Manoa Innovation Center on Oahu and is a participant of the High Technology Development Corporation's Virtual Tenant program.

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