

CASE STORY: Apollo Travel

International Travel Agency Provides Personal Service Online With Netop Live Guide



APOLLO Travel

Apollo Travel specializes in providing quality travel services online. The company is known for easy to use and informative service; Apollo books over 150,000 holidays per year in 48 destinations located in 28 countries. Since over 75 percent of all Apollo holidays are purchased online the company wanted to establish a more personalized connection with web-based customers through the use of live chat. The goal was to give customers immediate live chat access to online travel service agents in real time.

Challenge

Most people make their holiday travel arrangements online these days. Tech-savvy customers enjoy having direct access to full service travel online. But despite the convenience, online booking just doesn't have the same level of service you get when making travel plans one-on-one with an agent. The truth is, nothing beats the personal attention of a professional agent to ensure you get the most out of your vacation.

Apollo Travel, one of the largest tour operators in Scandinavia, set out to take their customer experience to a new level by giving online customers the ability to chat live with a travel agent directly on

the company website. According to Team Manager, Kim Johansen, Apollo chose Netop Live Guide as a solution to give online customers immediate access to customer service agents, live and in real time.

"We really want to hold onto visitors to our website until they have purchased their holiday," says Johansen. "It is important to give them a way to contact us directly if they have a question; we don't want them to have to wait for answer. Live Guide helps us provide an immediate response and keep online customers engaged."

Solution

Netop Live Guide gives Apollo customers the option of starting a two-way dialogue with a service agent in a matter of seconds. In a typical online environment, customers are isolated from the kind of person-to-person interaction that often makes the difference in closing the sale. For Apollo, the live chat function means that customers don't have to interrupt their purchase to ask for more information or to get assistance; all they have to do is click on "chat with us" to get an immediate answer, one-on-one with an agent.

Johansen says that Live Guide helps Apollo do more for its customers. "When it comes to destinations, nobody is better informed than our travel managers, who live out there the entire season. Giving our visitors the ability to chat directly with our staff gives us the ability to provide the best service."

Apollo agents are more efficient too, since they often utilize fixed expressions that are loaded into the system. For example, frequent phrases like "You're talking with Kim, How can I help you?" or "Thank you for your inquiry" are sent with the click of a mouse.

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While the customer writes back, agents have time to communicate with another online visitor.

Results

Apollo began using Live Guide in the Danish market in July of 2009. Since then the number of live chat inquiries has increased dramatically and now account for approximately 50% of all contacts.

Live Guide helps Apollo travel agents serve more customers in less time. "Our agents are three times more effective using live chat than when they use the telephone," explains Johansen. "An agent can only answer one telephone call at a time; but on average, they can answer three queries at the same time using live chat."

Customers often opt-in for additional services that would have been missed without Live Guide. "By answering online we sell more to our customers," says Johansen. "Previously customers could only call in or e-mail their questions. Live Guide gives us the ability to react to their needs at the time they are most likely to purchase."

Live chat helps encourage additional sales as Apollo customers get closer to their departure date. "In the period up to the holiday many customers contact us because they want to hear about the options their destination has to offer," says Johansen. "They want to hear how much half-board costs, if car hire is worthwhile, and what excursions are available." Addressing these options with live chat often results in additional sales and service. "Some want to be sure the beach is close by, others want to stay in the city center, or find out about what excursions will take place during their holiday.

Johansen points out that the convenient connection of live chat works well for both Apollo and its customers; so everyone is happy. "We know that many of our customers enjoy using chat too, because they find it is quicker than using the telephone."

Moving Forward

Apollo plans to establish live chat in Norway and Sweden, and to expand chat hours into the evening. "A lot of people book their holiday in the evening between 18:00 and 20:00, and our live chat should be open then too," says Johansen.

Providing immediate access to online travel agents using Live Guide has given Apollo Travel an edge in the marketplace. Contact Netop today to learn more about how you can build a similar business advantage using Live Guide.

Benefits of Using Live Guide

- Instantaneous customer connection
- Prompt and efficient personalized service
- Confidential video consultations protect privacy
- Regulatory compliant security safeguards
- 3x more effective than the telephone

